

# Everything Changes

by Dragoness

Category: Pok  mon

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2000-02-05 09:00:00

Updated: 2001-02-12 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 13:01:36

Rating: K+

Chapters: 40

Words: 71,610

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: I started out by changing ONE thing in a particular Pok  pisode, and seeing what follows. This fic is the result.  
Read

## 1. Kidnapped

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 1

Chapter 1

"Kidnapped"

--

\_This isn't good  \_|\_

--

I threw the net off of Pikachu and me. I couldn't believe that Team Rocket had stooped as low as kidnapping.

"Chu  |" Pikachu said, rubbing its head.

\_ 'Ow  | '\_

I looked at it in sympathy. Team Rocket hadn't exactly been gentle when they had thrown the two of us into their truck. Now I had no idea where we were going, but what was important right now was to get out of there and get to my Pok  mon League match with Richie.

\_I promised him  |\_

"Squirtle! Come out!"

I tossed my Pok  ball and Squirtle popped out.

"Squirtle!" it said, "Squirtle, squirtle?"

\_ 'Hey! Uhâ€|Where are we?' \_

- -

"Squirtle, see if you can fill this place up with water. Maybe we can flood the front part and get out of here," I said quietly.

"Squirt!"

\_ 'Okay!' \_

- -

Squirtle tilted its head towards the floor then started spitting out a continuous stream of water.

\_ This is taking too longâ€| \_

"Do you think you could speed it up a little?" I asked.

Squirtle doubled its efforts, but I could see it was going to tire out quickly.

"Piâ€|Piâ€|kaâ€|"

\_ 'Ughâ€|I'm gettingâ€|wet.'" \_

- -

"Don't complain, Pikachu. We're going to have to put up with a little water if we want to get out of here."

"Chu."

\_ 'Yeahâ€|' \_

- -

It seemed like it was taking forever for Squirtle to fill up the truck. Didn't Team Rocket notice by now? The truck seemed almost full. I looked at Squirtle. It was really getting tired, but it kept on squirting. No, I couldn't let it get all tired out because of me.

"Squirtleâ€|That's enough. It's not working."

"Squirt! Squirtle!"

\_ 'No! I'm fine!' \_

- -

"Squirtle, stop. I don't want you to hurt yourself." I took out another PokÃ©ball. "Bulbasaur! I choose you!"

Bulbasaur appeared at the surface of the water, then struggled to stay afloat.

"Bulbasaur, use your Leech Seed to get rid of this water."

"Squirtle! Squirtle!"

\_'But-! But I worked so hard!'\_

--

"Pikachu!"

\_'You don't know that it didn't work yet!'\_

--

I shook my head. "No. We're going to try another way out."

Bulbasaur looked at me, then let a small brown seed out of its bulb. It drifted into the water, then many long vines appeared and began to drain the water from the truck. After a while, we sank down to the floor, the only evidence of the recent flood was our own dampness.

"Okay! Pidgeotto! Muk! Charizard! Come out!"

"Pidgeo!!"

\_'I'm here!'\_

--

"M, muk!"

\_'Same with me!'\_

--

"!Zard."

\_'Yeah. Sure.'\_

--

I stood up, a little shakily. "Okay guys." I pointed at the rear door. "We're gonna try to ram that open. On the count of three, we'll charge. Got it?"

They all gave their agreement, except for Charizard, who stood at the back moodily.

"Okay! Here we go. One! Two! Three!!"

We all dashed into the doors. They didn't budge.

I groaned.

"Ouch!" I looked at my Pokémon. They seemed okay. Charizard was still standing at the other end, snickering to itself.

"Let's try that again!"

I pulled myself up, and they all did the same.

"Ready? One, two, three!!!"

We charged again. Once again, the doors didn't give.

"Owwâ€|" I glared at Charizard. "Charizard! Give us a hand!!"

"Charâ€|" it yawned. "Char zardâ€|" It waved at us dismissively.

\_'Nahâ€|You're doing fine. Keep at itâ€|'\_

--

I gritted my teeth.

\_'Fine. We can do this without your helpâ€|'\_

--

"Come on guysâ€|One more time." We stood up and got ready.  
"Oneâ€|twoâ€|THREE!!"

We charged one more time.

"CHUUU!!!"

Pikachu tried a small Thundershock. It only ended up shocking the rest of us.

"PIKACHU!!" I yelled.

"Chuâ€|"

\_'Sorryâ€|'\_

--

"Squirtâ€|Squirtleâ€|"

\_'This isn't working. We should give upâ€|'\_

--

"No! We won't give up! I have to get to that matchâ€|!"

"Muk!!"

\_'Again!'\_

--

I sighed. "You said it, Muk."

We all stood up one more time.

"One! Two! Three!!"

This time, the truck hit a bump, and EVERYBODY flew into the back. That means, Charizard included.

"AHH!!!"

"CHUU!!"

"ZZAAARRD!!"

We all slammed into back with a resounding thud. I was lucky enough to have Charizard land on top of meâ€|

"Ughhâ€|Charizardâ€|Returnâ€|"

It was a great relief to have it get off of me, let me tell you that much.

Then I realized something else. The truck had stopped moving.

"â€|Did we get the door open?" I asked my PokÃ©mon, too tired to look for myself.

Pikachu stood up a little to my left.

"Pikaâ€|â€|Pikachu."

\_'Noâ€|We dented it though.'\_

--

"Ohâ€|Then why did they stop?"

"Bulbasaur."

\_'Probably to see what that noise was.'\_

--

"Squirrâ€|"

\_'Yeah, probably.'\_

--

"Châ€|Pi!?"

\_'Uhâ€|Huh!?'\_

--

"What's the matter, Pikachu?" I asked.

"Pika!"

\_'They're coming!'\_

--

\_They're comingâ€|? \_I grinned. \_Then we can get out of hereâ€|\_

--

I sat up. "All right. When they open the door, get ready to jump them."

"Pika!?"

\_ 'Jump them!?' \_

--

I nodded. "You heard me."

Everyone got readyâ€|but the door never opened. I could hear them talking, but I couldn't understand what they were saying. I leaned closer to hear better, then jumped back in alarm as they started banging loudly on the doors.

"What on earth are they doing!!!" I yelled, covering my ears.

"Pikapi!!" Pikachu replied, tugging its ears down to close them.

\_ 'I have no idea!!' \_

--

"Squirt!!" Squirtle ducked inside of its shell.

After a long while, they stopped, marched back to the driver's section, and started the truck again.

"Whatâ€|did they do?" I asked.

"Pika?"

\_ 'Hm?' \_

--

Pikachu approached the door and tried to figure it out.

"Pikaâ€|â€|.Pikachu."

\_ 'I thinkâ€|â€|I don't know.' \_

--

"Wellâ€|Thanks for trying, Pikachu." I looked at my friends. "Who wants to try knocking it open again?"

"Bul! Bulbasaur!!"

\_ 'That's it! They must have barricaded the door!' \_

--

"What!? Butâ€|"

\_It's rightâ€|\_

--

"Thenâ€|How are we going to get out of here?"

"Chuâ€|"

\_I wish I knewâ€|'\_

--

We just sat around for a while, but we were all getting restless.

"â€|We might as well give it another try. We can't just give up, can we?"

"Bulbaâ€|Bulbasaurâ€|"

\_Sure we could give up. It would be easy.'\_

--

"Bulbasaur!!â€|â€|Hmph. Come on you guys. We have to keep trying. Iâ€|I promised Richieâ€|"

"Pika!! Pikachu!"

\_Yeah! Let's try again!'\_

--

"Bulâ€|? Bulba."

\_Huhâ€|? Fine. Suit yourself.'\_

--

"Let's go! One, two, three!!"

"Pika!!"

"Muk!"

"Piddgeo!"

We all slammed into the door. I think it hurt a lot more that time, even without Charizard landing on top of meâ€|

"â€|Owwâ€|"

"Piiâ€|kaaâ€|"

"Geooâ€| "

"Muk. "

At least Muk was okay.

"Hey Mukâ€|You want to give it one more go?"

"MUK!!" Muk said happily.

\_'Sure!!' \_

"Let's get outta the way, guys," I said to Pikachu and Pidgeotto.

We did, and Muk slammed into the door over and over and over again. Each time, nothing happened.

The rest of us just watched, until Pikachu decided to join in. Muk didn't seem to be getting tiredâ€|at first. Pikachu was obviously getting tired really fast, but it kept at it. Eventually, Bulbasaur decided to lend a handâ€|Well, sort of. You know what I mean.

"Ughâ€|I don't think it's working," I said, "Don't wear yourselves out. We still have to get back to the Stadium once we do get out of here."

"CHU!"

Pikachu ignored me and rammed into the door one more time.

"Pikachu! Didn't you hear me?! Stop!"

"Châ€|U!"

Pikachu punched the door angrily. Panting, it sat down and didn't try to get the door open anymore.

## 2. Meeting Boss Rocket

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 2

### Chapter 2

"Meeting Boss Rocket"

The truck screeched to a stop. I heard the doors at the front slam shut.

\_'They're coming.\_

--

Then I realized what that meant.

"Guys! Guys! This time, I know they're gonna open the door. Get ready to attack!" I whispered.

My PokÃ©mon looked at me and nodded. They were ready. I decided to



get ready too.

The door rattled, and I heard Jessie yelling at James. I barely heard him whine an apology, then the door started rattling some more. I heard Meowth say something. The door stopped rattling for a moment, then they rattled it some more.

\_What is taking them so long?\_

--

After a long time of waiting anxiously, they flung the door open.

"Now!" I shouted.

"Now!" shouted Meowth.

"Roger!" Jessie and James said. They aimed two gun barrels at us. Before anyone could stop them, two huge streams of white goo came hurtling at us. I was completely covered, and when I looked around, I saw that all of my Pok  mon were too.

"Pikachu!" I yelled, or, I tried to yell. The goo hardened so quickly that I could hardly move a muscle. I didn't give up though. "Pikachu! Use your Thundershock!"

Pikachu heard me. I know that for sure. It shouted a muffled "CHU!!", but there was no evidence of electricity.

Meowth laughed. "HA!! This was our best plan yet!"

Jessie smiled. "You bet! First, kidnap the twerp. Then, if he doesn't cooperate, cover him with super glue! We'll be getting our Pikachu really soon now!"

"And the boss will give us all promotions!" James said excitedly.

"Let me out of here!" I tried to shout. The glue was very hard though.

"No way," said Jessie, "You have a very important meeting  with the boss."

"So you'd better be on your best behavior!" warned James.

"Yeah! Da boss doesn't like troublemakers!" said Meowth.

Jessie and James bopped him on the head.

"No wonder he hates us so much  !" Jessie muttered.

"Yeah. We're the world's best troublemakers," said James.

"You're not getting Pikachu!!" I mumbled through the super glue.

"Moh mot metting Mikamoo!" Jessie mocked me. They all had a good laugh.

"It's not funny!! I have a very important match to get to!"

"Ha! He sounds like a paralyzed Metapod!" laughed Meowth.

"And he's just as worthless as one," said Jessie, "Come on. Let's get hauling. Arbok! Lickitung! Go!"

Arbok and Lickitung came out of their Pokéballs.

"Go Weezing! Go Victreebel!"

Weezing and Victreebel also came out.

"What are you gonna do with them!?" I demanded.

They decided to ignore me, and they each pulled out a buzzsaw.

\_What theâ€|?\_

--

"Let's get sawin'!" said Meowth. He turned his on. Jessie and James turned theirs on too.

"Wait a second!! You can't buzzsaw us!! We're too young to die!"

"We're not going to kill you, numbskull," retorted Jessie, "We're just going to make you more travel-friendly."

"Huh?"

I soon found out what they meant. They were cutting the super glue that was in between each of us, making us all separated. Otherwise, we looked like one big winter scene. When they were done, they had their Pokémon haul us into a big mansion.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"Huh? I can't understand a word he's sayin'," said Meowth.

\_Liar. You could understand me beforeâ€|\_

--

"It doesn't matter," said Jessie, "He doesn't have any say in this. That's why he can't talk. Get it?"

"Ohâ€|Yeah!" Meowth laughed. "I like that!"

\_â€|I'll get back at them laterâ€|Right now I need to find a way out of here.\_

--

We were all marched to a big fancy set of doors, and Jessie knocked timidly.

"Who is it!?" an irritable voice said from inside.

"Uhâ€¦We've brought the twe-, I meanâ€¦the boy and his PokÃ©monâ€¦sirâ€¦" Jessie said.

"â€¦Come in."

\_Why does he want \_me\_?\_

--

James opened the doors, and their PokÃ©mon hauled us in.

A mean looking man in an ugly orange suit was sitting behind a desk. He glared at us. Finally, he spoke.

"Whatâ€¦did you do to them?" he said.

"Uhâ€¦We super glued them for you!" said Jessie.

He raised an eyebrow. "Super glued?"

"Uh-huh! We super glued them so they couldn't run away!"

"â€¦â€¦Not bad." He looked at us, still trapped. I think he smiled. "Not bad at all. For once, you three have managed to do something right. Heh. I'll give you raise in your next paycheck."

Jessie, James, and Meowth literally jumped for joy.

"Oh thank you! You're too kind!" said James.

"â€¦If you don't want the raiseâ€¦"

Jessie and Meowth covered James's mouth before he could respond.

"No, that's quite alright. We'll take it," Jessie assured him.

"â€¦Fine. Now leave."

"Yes sir!" they all said, saluting. Then they dashed out the door, slamming it shut behind them.

The 'boss' watched them leave. Then he looked down at me.

"Soâ€¦I finally get to meet Ash Ketchumâ€¦I'm a big fan of yours."

"Huh!!?"

"â€¦â€¦Especially from what I've heard about your Pikachu. It's about time those blunderers got hold of it."

"You can't have Pikachu!!"

"Pika!" Pikachu said.

\_ 'Yeah!' \_

--

He chuckled quietly.

"You really believe that? Look at your present situation. You're been immobilized. You're PokÃ©mon can't help you. And guess what else? Nobody knows where you are. You don't even know where you are, I'll bet."

"Uh-! Wellâ€¦â€¦"

\_â€¦He's rightâ€¦I don't where I amâ€¦and Misty and Brock thought I went to talk to Richieâ€¦Richie? The match! When I don't show upâ€¦they're gonnaâ€¦They don't know where I am. They're gonna think I forfeitedâ€¦\_

--

"What time is it!?"

"Huh? Why would youâ€¦? Ohâ€¦" He grinned. "Worried about your match? Why don't we see for ourselves?"

"What are you-?"

He picked up a remote control and aimed it at a TV on the corner of his desk. The screen flickered on to show a dark gym floor with a trainer at one end. There was no one at the other.

"Is thatâ€¦?"

\_â€¦and there's still no sign of trainer, Ash Ketchum. This has been a very long wait folks, and it's starting to look like he's decided to forfeit the match!"\_

--

"No! I didn't forfeit!"

\_ "I wonder how Richie feels about thisâ€¦He already asked the ref if they could wait ten more minutes for Ash to show up. That takes real guts folks. I guess he came here for a match, and his opponent didn't even show up!"\_

--

\_He asked them to wait longer. Iâ€¦I promised I would show upâ€¦\_

--

\_ "Wait. It looks like the ten minutes are up. Wow. I guess Ash couldn't take the pressure and decided that a loss by forfeiting is better than a loss by actually losing. No one will ever become a PokÃ©mon Master that way. Learn it from Ash!"\_

--

The camera zoomed in on the referee.

\_"Ash has forfeited the match! The battle goes to Richie!"\_

--

"No!"

The crowd started cheering wildly. Richie looked devastated. I felt sorry for him, but I couldn't help feeling sorrier for me. As the camera zoomed out, I thought I saw two figures running towards him.

"I think that's all we need to see."

"No! Wait!"

He gave me a disgusted look, but he left the TV on.

\_"It looks like Ketchum's two coaches are approaching the referee. Maybe they can explain his absence?"\_

--

The camera zoomed in to show Misty and Brock talking to the referee, with Richie standing to the side, watching.

\_"He would never forfeit!"\_ Misty was saying, \_"I've known Ash for a year now, and he's never given up until the end."\_

--

\_"At the very least, I know he would show up,"\_ Brock added.

\_"I think something's happened that's stopped him from coming. He might be in trouble!"\_

--

\_"Ash is in trouble?"\_ Richie said.

The referee looked at the three of them. They were obviously worried about me. I was glad I had friends like them.

"They'll never find you," the boss told me. He must have seen my relief somehow.

\_"Until we have proof, the battle still goes to Richie,"\_ said the ref, \_"For now, notify the police. They'll find him."\_

--

\_"Thank you,"\_ Misty said, \_"You don't know how much this means to us."\_

--

The camera switched to show the announcer. He looked a bit flustered, if you ask me.

\_"Wow. Folks, we have here a really special case on our hands. It

seems like even his coaches don't know where he is. I guess the police will take it from here. I've never seen anything like this before. If Ash Ketchum really is missing, I can't say what the rest of the competition will doâ€|"\_

--

A woman approached him and whispered something in his ear. He looked a surprised, but he leaned back into the microphone and started talking again.

\_"Until the whereabouts of Ketchum are found, the tournament will be put on hold!"\_

--

There was a mixed reaction from the crowd, and I couldn't tell exactly what they were.

\_"Remember, this is a friendly competition, and if one trainer is unable to compete, none should be able to. We have an equal opportunity policy here at Indigo Plateau. And rest assured, the police and the rest of us will not rest until this young trainer is found!"\_

--

The woman said something to him again.

\_"There's nothing more to see here. All battles have been postponedâ€|Let's go to our commercial breakâ€|Later, we'll have an update for all you viewers at homeâ€|"\_

--

He trailed off and the boss clicked off the TV.

"Well," he stated, "it seems as if you've created quite a stir."

"Whaddaya mean \_me\_?" I retorted, "It was your clones that stopped me from showing up in the first place!"

"Ehâ€|The correct word is 'cronies'," he replied tersely.

"Whatever! I still want to know why to brought me here in the first place!"

He grinned evilly and leaned forward. "That answer should be obvious. I want your PokÃ©mon." He gave Pikachu a sideways leer. "Particularly that Pikachu. I've heard its quite the fighter."

"â€|That's right. And as soon as you let it out of that glue, it's gonna give you a shock you'll never forget!"

"Chu!!" Pikachu shouted.

\_'That's right!\_'

--

He shook his head in amusement. "I think not. For one thing, what use is a Pokémon without a trainer? Can you tell me that, Ash?"

"What do you mean?"

He sighed. "You're not very quick are you?"

I decided not to answer him.

"We've tried capturing trained Pokémon before. Let's just say it wasn't very pleasant for their new trainers."

"I know what you mean," I muttered, remembering when I first got Pikachu.

"Hm? What's that mean?"

"Uh-! Nothing!" I covered, badly.

He gave me an inquisitive gaze for a while, then went back to talking.

"So I've started a new program." He looked down and pressed a button on his desk. "Jessie! James! Report to my office immediately!" he shouted.

Moments later, the said trio appeared in the doorway.

"Yes sir! How can we be of service, sir!?" they saluted in almost-unison. Meowth looked a little sour at not being named as part of the group.

"Do you still have the saws with you?" the boss asked them.

"Yes sir!" replied James, pulling out his. Jessie and Meowth did the same.

The boss looked at me. "That's good. Because I see only five Pokémon here. He must have one still on his belt. Retrieve it for me."

"What!?" I shouted.

"You want us to cut into his stomach?" James asked.

"No!!!" I screamed, "You can't do that!!"

The boss simply nodded. "That's where he keeps his Pokéballs, isn't it?"

I felt sick. I felt like I was going to throw up, catch a fever, a cold, and faint all at the same time.

"Ya want us ta \_kill\_ im?" asked Meowth.

"No!" the boss responded angrily, "I just want you to retrieve his Pokéball. Leave the boy intact."

"That's a relief," I muttered.

\_At least he doesn't \_want\_ to kill me. Can't be so sure that \_those\_ three will be very successful thoughâ€|\_

--

Jessie started her buzz saw. "Let's get started then, shall we?"

James and Meowth did the same. They all approached me, saws buzzing crazily.

"Pika!! Pikachu!!"

\_ 'Ash!! No!!' \_

--

Nowâ€|forgive me if I wasn't exactly brave during all of this. If three imbeciles were sawing at your stomach with buzz saws, I'm sure you wouldn't have looked either. At least I didn't wet my pantsâ€|

I wasn't timing it, but after what seemed like a long time, the buzzing stopped rather suddenly.

\_Am I dead yet?\_ I wondered as I cautiously opened my eyes, scared of what I might see.

"I got it!" Meowth proclaimed, holding up a red and white PokÃ©ball.

I did my best to look down. As far as I could tell, I was okay. At least, I wasn't bleeding all over the place.

"Good job," said the boss, "Give it to me."

Meowth reluctantly handed it to the boss. He took it and examined it.

"What PokÃ©mon is it?" he asked me.

"Like I'd tell youâ€|"

"â€|Jessie. James. You've fought him enough times. Which PokÃ©mon is missing?"

"Huh?" said James.

"Uhhâ€|That Charizard," said Meowth.

The boss seemed impressed. "A Charizard, eh? I wonder why it wasn't out of its PokÃ©ball. It probably could have gotten you out of this mess before you got into it."

\_That's none of your businessâ€|\_

He smiled slightly at my silence.

"Either you didn't think of that, orâ€|you have a problem PokÃ©mon in



this Pokéball."

I kept my silence, even though he was making me angry.

"You three," he said to Jessie, James, and Meowth, "Get the Pokémon in holding room. Leave the boy here."

"What?" I said, breaking my silence.

"Pika! Pika!" Pikachu cried.

'Wait! Leave me here too!'

--

I smiled beneath the glue. I always knew I could count on Pikachu to want to stick with me. Even if that meant being really sticky.

"Come out Arbok and Lickitung!" ordered Jessie.

"You too, Weezing and Victreebel!" said James.

Together, they carried my Pokémon through a sliding metal door that was on the right wall in the far right corner. When their job was done, they promptly left.

"Where did you take them!?" I demanded, "What's in there? What will you do to them!?"

"Tsk tsk tsk. So many questions. Ask one at a time, young man, and you might get the answer you're looking for."

"I don't have time for this! Let me go!"

"Okay."

I blinked in disbelief.

"What?"

"I said okay."

I gave him a suspicious look, even though he couldn't see it.

"What's the catch?"

He laughed quietly. "Of course there's a catch. You have to join Team Rocket."

"What!?"

"I can't let you go otherwise. So what do say? Join us?"

"Never!!"

He seemed to consider that. "Fine then. You'll make a very interesting decoration here in my office."

"I'll make a what?"

"A talking statue? Why didn't I think of that before?"

He was being way too casual about this.

"Of course, it's your decision. If you want to stay as you are now, you're free to do so. If not, you're just as welcome to join Team Rocket. Just let me know when you change your mind."

"I'm never going to join Team Rocket. Especially not after this."

--

"No change? That's okay. You might think differently tomorrow. Or the day after. I'm very patient."

"Well, so am I!" I lied.

He chuckled. "Yes, I'm sure you are, little boy. You must be very patient."

I really didn't appreciate his sarcasm.

"I won't join Team Rocket. You can't make me."

"I know that. I'm not trying either. I'm giving you a simple choice. You make the decision. It's not as if I'm forcing you or anything."

"Yeah, and Pikachu is a banana," I thought bitterly. "Who does this guy think he is?! He can't keep me here forever! Right?"

--

He looked at his watch. "It's getting late. I'll see you in the morning. We'll see if you've changed your mind or not. Until then."

He turned and entered the door on the left-hand wall. That's when I saw his Persian for the first time. It followed him in, then he turned off the light and shut the door.

I was all alone, in pitch black, and very stiff.

### 3. Team Rocket's Rockin'

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 3

#### Chapter 3

"Team Rocket's Rockin' "

I had a lot of trouble sleeping that night. I wasn't in a good sleeping position, and I had a lot of worries running through my mind. Were my Pokémon okay? What was Team Rocket up to? Was he really going to leave me in this shell until I joined Team Rocket? Maybe Meowth and Jessie were right. I felt just as helpless and useless as a paralyzed Metapod. No, I'm more like a frozen

oneâ€|

I sighed. He couldn't make me join Team Rocket. There was no way. He couldn't leave me in this thing foreverâ€|â€|He couldn't!â€|There was no wayâ€|â€|But it was becoming harder and harder to push the doubts out of my mindâ€|

I tried to shift my position, because I was getting very uncomfortable. I couldn't budge.

\_This is going to be a \_long\_ nightâ€|\_

\* \* \*

I must have fallen asleep, because I woke up to see the boss sitting behind his desk and looking at his computer. He glanced at me when he noticed that I was awake.

"Good morning, my talking statue. Did you have a good night's rest?"

"Do you \_think\_ I did? I can't even move!"

He shrugged. "It was entirely your choice to stay in there. Remember, you can come out whenever you want to."

I glared at him. He was the one who'd trapped me in the first place! Well, actually, it was Jessie and James, but they were part of his organization. If he hadn't started Team Rocket, he wouldn't be forcing me to join it, now would he?

After a pause, the quiet was interrupted by my stomach.

"â€|Hungry?" asked Boss Rocket.

Now that I'd been reminded, I realized that I \_was\_â€|very hungry.

"Yeahâ€|" I said brusquely.

"Hmâ€|"

My stomach grumbled again.

"Uhhâ€|" I started.

"What?"

"Uhâ€|Do you have anyâ€|breakfast?"

"â€|Why should you care? Even if I did, you wouldn't be able to eat it, anyway."

I stifled as I realized that he was right.

\_Stupid super glueâ€|I'd be fine if it weren't all over me!\_

--

I suddenly realized what that meant.

\_No! I'm not going to join Team Rocket! Never! He can't make me!\_

--

Boss Rocket, seeing that I was done talking, went back to work.

Not being able to do anything else, I just sat there, got hungrier, and listened to my stomach complain about it.

I couldn't take it anymore.

"Geez! Just let me out, will ya!? Are you trying to kill me or something!?"

He responded very calmly. "I am not trying to kill you. The only one preventing you from leaving thatâ€¦is yourself. You can either stay there, or come out and join Team Rocket. It's up to you. I would think that the sooner you leave, the betterâ€¦"

"I'm not going to join Team Rocket!!"

My stomach didn't agree with me, and made that known for everyone within earshot.

"Then you'll just have to stay there." He smirked. "It's been a while since I've had an office decoration this amusing."

"I am not an office decoration!!" I shouted. He was really getting on my nerves.

He just shrugged. "Believe what you like. However, remember that you are an immobile object that is in my office. Hence the term, office decorationâ€¦I would love to see you try to prove me wrongâ€¦â€¦" He sneered.

\_I am not an office decoration. I am not an office decoration.\_

--

"â€¦â€¦Sir?"

He seemed surprised. "Yes?"

"You're a PokÃ©mon trainer, right?"

He smiled. "One of the best."

"Then I challenge you to a PokÃ©mon battle! If I win, you'll let me leave, if I lose, I'll join Team Rocket."

He grinned evilly. "Nice try. If I let you out of there and give you your PokÃ©mon, you'll just take them and leave."

"No I won't! I promise!"

"â€¦You're not exactly the best person to take the word ofâ€¦"

\_What is he talkingâ€¦?â€¦Richieâ€¦\_

--

"That's not true!!! I would have been there if you guys hadn't kidnapped me!!!"

"But you still didn't show up."

"Come on! You've gotta believe me! Please! I won't break my promise! Just let me battle you in a Pok  mon match."

He held up his hand. "I've got a better idea. Why don't you just join Team Rocket and save us both the trouble?"

"Ha! You're just scared that you're gonna lose!"

He shook his head. "Things like this should not be settled with Pok  mon battles. Could you imagine if all arguments were settled with Pok  mon? The world would be nothing but one big battlefield. You wouldn't want that to happen, would you?"

"But  !"

He shook his head again. "I leave you with the same choices I gave you in the first place. Join, or stay as you are."

I tried to contain my anger. How dare he have me make a choice like that! How dare he  !

\_It would serve him right if I joined, then took my Pok  mon and left just like he  !  !  !\_

--

"I'll join!"

He stared at me in shock. "Really?"

"Yes! I will join Team Rocket!"

He gave me a good, long, look. "Are you sure about this? You seemed to change your mind rather suddenly  !"

"I'm sure. Now let me outta this thing!"

He pressed a button on his desk. "Jessie. James. Meowth. Please report to my office immediately  ! I have a small task for you."

Once again, the three of them were in the office within minutes.

"Reporting for duty, sir!" they saluted.

He nodded towards me. "Let him out."

"Uhh  ! Yes sir!" said Jessie.

"Wait! Not the  ! buzz  ! saws  ! again  !" I began as I saw them take out their buzzsaws.

"Let 'em rip!" laughed Meowth.

"Don't rip \_me\_!!" I shouted.

"Don't hurt him," Boss Rocket backed me up.

"Uh, yes sir!" replied James.

I didn't look as they sawed off my shell. I was too scared.

Bits and pieces fell away, and I found myself free once againâ€|

"Andâ€|voila!" said Meowth, as the last piece fell off.

It hadn't been a split-second operation, but it was too quick all the same. The sudden lack of support caught me off guard and I collapsed to the ground.

"â€|What's wrong with him?" I heard Meowth ask.

"He's been inside of that thing for a while. His body probably deactivated itself to a degree, and he'll need time to get his blood flowing againâ€|" answered the boss.

I groaned. He was right. I had pins and needles all over my body. If I tried to move, the pain just got worse, but if I didn't move, it got worse anyway.

"â€|You may leave now," said Boss Rocket.

"Who? Us?" asked Jessie.

"No. The boy," he replied scornfully, "Of course, you! Now get out before I decide to take back your raise!"

"Yes sir!" they saluted loudly then hurried out of the room.

I somehow managed to get myself into a sitting position. I stared up at him painfully.

"â€|Welcome to Team Rocketâ€|What do you think so far?"

"I feel awful."

He laughed. "You'll get used to it. Now we can begin the inaugurationâ€|Don't expect a big ceremony though. We're going to get straight to business."

"I wouldn't expect anything less," I said weakly.

He eyed me for a second, then pushed the button on his desk. "Billie! Report to my office at once!"

"â€|Billie?" I repeated.

It took a little longer than Jessie, James and Meowth had, but someone popped through his door in a few minutes. I shifted around until I was facing the newcomer.

"Huh!? You're a girl?"

She looked like she was just a bit taller than Misty. She had long, dark brown-black hair that fell to her waist. Her eyes were gray. She was wearing the black variation of the Team Rocket uniform.

"Yeahâ€|" she said cautiously, as she noticed me for the first time.

"Billie, this will be your partner," said Boss Rocket.

"What!?" I yelped.

He glared at me.

"Billie, do all of us a favor and gather the necessary items for your partner."

"Uhâ€|Do you meanâ€|?" she asked hesitantly.

He nodded. "You know what I mean."

She suddenly snapped into a salute. "Yes sir! Right away!" With that, she turned and exited the room.

"â€|What was that all about?" I asked.

"You cannot become a member of Team Rocket if you are not equipped with certain items."

I turned around again. I got the feeling that a long explanation was coming along.

"Item number one," he began, "Every member of Team Rocket must own at least one PokÃ©mon that was caught in the wild."

"In the wild!?" I asked in surprise. I'd always thought Team Rocket always stole for their PokÃ©mon.

He gave me an angry glance for interrupting. Then he continued. "Item number two. All members of Team Rocket must own a Team Rocket uniform that is apposite to their rank."

"Is \_what\_ to their rank?"

He ignored me. "Item number three. All members of Team Rocket must acknowledge and adhere to all the rules of the organization of Team Rocket."

"Say \_what\_!?"

"â€|Billie will help you with all of theseâ€|Until then, have this."

He tossed me an oatmeal cookie. I grabbed at it and gobbled it down hungrily. He gave me an amused look.

"â€|â€|â€|Billie should be coming backâ€|right aboutâ€|â€|now."

Billie burst into the office.

"Got 'em!" she exclaimed. In one hand, she was clutching a bunch of stuff. She was using her free hand to hold the door open.

"Good. Give them to Ash."

She frowned. "Who?"

He sighed. "Your partner."

"O-Ohhh! Yes sir!"

She left the door behind her and dropped her bundle in front of me.

"There you go," she said.

I stared at it. A Team Rocket uniform—Black, like hers—and a Pokéball. I looked up at Boss Rocket.

"Why do I need a Pokéball? I already have Pokémon of my own!"

He smiled slyly. "They're not yours anymore."

"What!?"

"Those Pokémon are now the property of Team Rocket—Just like you are."

"What!!! That's a bunch of-!!" I tried to jump up, but pain jolted through my legs and I submitted to staying seated—for the moment.

He laughed quietly. "How dumb do you think I am? I know you won't be totally loyal right away. You need another motive to stay with us. That's why I am keeping your Pokémon under custody."

"You thief! You just stole all my Pokémon!"

"That's my job. Now, it's yours too."

"You can't just take them! They'll never be loyal to you!"

"—I've thought about that, and while I'm sure that I could easily make them loyal, I'm giving you an opportunity to get them back."

"I'll take it!" I shouted.

"Never volunteer for something until you know what it is," he said, making me look very dumb, "However, I think you'll like this anyway—You can earn my trust by proving your loyalty and successfully completing missions. I'll give you back your Pokémon in return for missions that you've completed successfully, taking into account their difficulty and importance. Does that sound fair to you, Ash?"



"â€|â€| "

\_That means that I'll have toâ€|actually work for Team Rocket. I can't do that! I just said I would join so that I would get out of that shellâ€|But if I don't say yes, then I'll never get my PokÃ©mon backâ€|â€|\_

--

"â€|Thatâ€|sounds fairâ€|" I mumbled.

"Then welcome to the team, Ash Ketchum!" he declared, "Get your uniform on, grab your PokÃ©mon, and Billie will tell you the rest."

#### 4. Prepare For Trouble

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 4

#### Chapter 4

"Prepare For Trouble"

Team Rocketâ€|I'd never thought I would end up wearing their uniformâ€|and actually being part of their team. It was like a nightmare come trueâ€|Maybe even worse.

"Okay, Ash. Have you ever worn a disguise before?" Billie asked.

I thought backâ€|

\_Wellâ€|there was that time thatâ€|â€|\_

--

\* \* \*

--

\_"What do you \_mean\_, you won't let me in!?" I asked. They were an official gym! They couldn't just kick me out!\_

--

\_"You wouldn't want to come in here anyway!" replied the girl who had just kicked me out, "In this gym, we don't just train PokÃ©mon, we also manufacture that 'yucky' perfume that you hate so much!"\_

--

\_"What!? You \_make\_ that stuff!?"\_

--

\_"Yes. And we don't allow anyone in here who doesn't appreciate our perfume. Good bye!"\_

--

\_With that, she promptly stamped an "X" on my face and shoved me out of the doorway.\_

--

\_â€|I needed to find a way in there, or else I couldn't win my Rainbow Badge. I kept walking around to see if there might be another way in. That's when I saw none other than Jessie, James, and Meowth hanging in a tree. Jessie told me that she knew a way that I could get in there. I really hadn't wanted to cooperate with them, but I didn't have a choice. I needed to get that badgeâ€|\_

--

\_â€|They put me in a dress.\_

--

\_ \* \* \* \_

"â€|Yeahâ€|but it wasn't a very good oneâ€|" I said.

"â€|â€|We're going to have to get you a \_really\_ good one. You're gonna need a different name, too."

"What!?"

"â€|You mean you don't know?" she asked in surprise.

"Don't know what?" I asked.

"My gosh! Ash! You're famous!"

I raised an eyebrow. "You didn't recognize me."

"You had glue stuck all over you."

"But they cut me out!"

"Still, you had to wash to get it all out of your hair and stuff, didn't you?"

"â€|â€|Yeah."

"See? People will \_recognize\_ you, Ash! They've got your picture all over the news! You're a missing person! Everyone wants to find you!"

\_Everyoneâ€|? They're looking for me?â€|Wowâ€|\_

--

"â€|Really?" I asked redundantly.

"\_Yeah\_," she said in exasperation, "Geez. You need to get out more."

I flushed slightly. She was right. I had spent all of last afternoon, last night, and this morning trapped in a straightjacket of super glue.

"So What disguise did you have in mind?"

"Well You're gonna need a wig"

"A \_wig\_?" Last time, my wig hadn't worked out too well

"And, uh Basically a complete makeover. A different voice wouldn't hurt either. Anyone who's watched the Pok mon League tournament this year knows what you sound like."

"Not another voice" I groaned. I was terrible at voices. I always forgot and slipped back into my regular voice.

"Either that or We just won't go out on any missions until everyone thinks that you're dead."

"\_What\_?"

She shrugged. "When someone's been missing for a certain number of days, they assume that they're dead."

"I don't want \_that\_ to happen"

"Then you get a disguise! Come on. Let's go pick one out."

"U-h! I get to be a boy, right?"

She gave me a quizzical look. "\_Duh\_!"

\* \* \*

The guy in the mirror did \_not\_ look like me.

"I don't like it," I said finally.

"Huh? Why not?" asked Billie.

"Well It's just not \_me\_," I said.

She bonked me on the head. "Of course not, you dummy! That's the whole point!"

"Ow" I said, rubbing my head, "You didn't have to hit me"

"Talk back again and I'll smack you!"

"Are \_all\_ girls this violent"? I wondered.

"So what's your name gonna be?"

"Huh?"

"Your \_name\_! You can't just go around telling everyone that you're Ash Ketchum! They'll turn you in to the police for sure!"

\_That wouldn't be all that bad They could help me get my Pok mon back.\_

--

"Umâ€| "

I needed a nameâ€|â€|â€|\_What could I use? Not Ashâ€|Something elseâ€|â€|â€|What aboutâ€|?\_

"Uhâ€|â€|How aboutâ€|â€|Tom Ato?" I grinned nervously. At least if we saw Misty or Brock, they would recognize that nameâ€|

"Tomâ€|Ato?" she asked skeptically.

"Uh-huh!" I nodded vigorously.

"Ehhâ€|â€|I guess it could workâ€| "

\_Yes!\_ I congratulated myself for my cunning.

"Okayâ€|Tomâ€|â€|Let's go steal some PokÃ©mon."

I blanched. I \_really\_ didn't want to steal anyone's PokÃ©monâ€|

"Uhhâ€|Do we have to?" I asked.

"Yeah," she stated, "We're Team Rocket. That's what we do. It's our \_job\_."

"â€|Oh."

"\_Oh\_ is right. Now let's go. There are PokÃ©mon out there just waiting to be stolen!"

\_For some reason, I don't believe thatâ€|\_

--

"â€|Right."

\* \* \*

I blinked at the sunlight. It had been a while since I'd been outsideâ€|even longer since I'd been outside without my hat. Billie wouldn't let me wear it, because one, it would help people recognize me, and two, it was an official PokÃ©mon League hat, and Team Rocket was separate from the PokÃ©mon Leagueâ€|At least, that's what Billie said. I guess she didn't know who was in charge of the Viridian Gymâ€|

"All right, Ash, since you're new at this, I'll guide you through step by step. First of all, Team Rocket always takes the low roads. We can't be seen until we want to be seen. Next, when see a trainer, or a group of trainers, we figure out a way to get their PokÃ©mon. Then we make our move!"

"â€|That's it?"

"â€|â€|â€|Oh yeahâ€| "

"What?"

"Umâ€¦What do you think we should say for our motto?"

"Not that!" I groaned.

She flushed. "Well, every other Team Rocket team has a motto! I don't see why we shouldn't!"

"Because mottos are dumb! They're the same thing every time, and they're a waste of time!"

She got angrier. "They are not! Mottos are part of the fun of being on Team Rocket! You were just jealous before, because you didn't have one! Now you can! Come on! We need a motto!"

I sighed. "Then you write it. Let me know when you're done."

"â€¦Really?"

"Yeah."

"Ohâ€¦â€¦Okay!" She grinned. "I'll make it the best motto ever!"

That wouldn't be too hardâ€¦

--

"â€¦Umâ€¦While you're doing thatâ€¦What am I supposed to be doing?"

"Huh? Ohâ€¦You can look out for PokÃ©mon trainers."

"â€¦Okay."

We were sitting on a wooded hill above the path into Viridian City. The Spearows and Pidgeys in the trees around us chirped merrily. I kind of wished they would shut up. What I needed was a way to get my PokÃ©mon back and get back to Indigo Plateau.

I sighed and scanned the path. No one was coming into Viridian City. All the good PokÃ©mon trainers were at Indigo Plateauâ€¦Except meâ€¦â€¦

"Huh?"

Billie looked up. "What is it?"

It couldn't beâ€¦

"Someone's coming!" I whispered.

"Yes!" she hissed, "Now we get to try out our new motto!"

I should have smacked her.

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 5

## Chapter 5

"Secret Identity"

"Soâ€¦now what do we do?" I asked nervously.

"Umâ€¦Let's make this simple. We'll just stop them and ask them to hand over all their PokÃ©mon."

\_That's not gonna workâ€¦\_

--

Seeâ€¦I knew those PokÃ©mon trainers. Misty, Brock, and Richie. They weren't gonna give in that easilyâ€¦but I couldn't let Billie know that.

"â€¦We don't have to say ourâ€¦'motto', do we?"

"Of course!" she replied, "Come on, they're getting close."

"But I don't even know how it goes!" I protested.

She shoved a piece of paper in my hand. "Just read off the script. Now come on! It's time for your first steal!"

She jumped down to the path. I paused and looked at the 'script'.

\_Boy, does she write fastâ€¦\_ I thought, before I followed after her.

"Prepare for trouble!!" she shouted out.

\_I can't believe I'm doing thisâ€¦\_

--

"Uhhâ€¦Make it double," I read.

"To protect the world from devastation!"

"Toâ€¦unite all peoplesâ€¦within ourâ€¦nation?"

\_That sounds familiarâ€¦\_

--

"To denounce the evils of truth and love!"

"Huh? This is exactly the same as-!"

She smacked me, and I decided it was best to just play along.

"To extend our reach to the stars above!" I yelled hoarsely.

"Billie!"

"Uhhâ€|Why does this say-?"

\*whack\*

"Tom!!" I cringed.

"Team Rocket, blast off at the speed of light!"

"Surrender now, or prepare to fightâ€|"

"Huh? Again?" said Brock.

"Butâ€|I've never seen you two beforeâ€|" said Misty.

I rubbed my head.

\_They don't recognize me? This \_must\_ be a good disguiseâ€|\_

--

"Enough with the small talk!" snapped Billie, "Give us all your PokÃ©mon!"

"Not on your life!" retorted Brock.

"We don't have time for this!" yelled Misty, "Have you guys seen Ash!?"

I blinked.

\_I haveâ€|\_

--

Billie growled. "Whyâ€|would we care about some half-wit PokÃ©mon kid who was stupid enough to get kidnapped?"

\_Hey!\_

I glared at her. She chose to ignore me.

"We just want your PokÃ©mon!"

"Well, you can't have them!" Misty shouted back, "Now get lost!"

\_Too late for thatâ€|\_

"Uhâ€|Maybe we should try another tactic?" I asked.

"Huh?" Billie asked.

"Umâ€|We would really appreciate it if you would lend us your PokÃ©monâ€|" I said.

Everyone stared at me.

"â€|He looks kinda familiarâ€|" said Richie.

\_Really!? It's about timeâ€|\_

--

"That'll never work!" said Billie, "You've got to \_take\_ their PokÃ©mon! They can't just \_give\_ them to you!"

"You never knowâ€|" I said quietly.

"Move it, or lose it!" Misty interrupted, "Just \_forget\_ about getting our PokÃ©mon! We're in a hurry here!"

\_They really care about meâ€|Awâ€|\_

--

"Hey!" I brightened, "What ifâ€|you give us your PokÃ©mon, andâ€|I'll tell youâ€|a secret!"

"Whatâ€|kind of a secretâ€|?" Billie asked, giving me a meaningful look.

I just grinned.

"Yeah, what kind?" said Brock.

"Wellâ€|I'm sure you want to knowâ€|â€|.But first I need a PokÃ©mon!"

"\_TOM!\_" Billie strained.

"Itâ€|doesn't even have to be yours!" I said happily, "You could just catch a wild one and give it to me! Yeah! That counts as stolen, doesn't it, Billie?"

She was losing her temper, but she tried to control it.

"That'sâ€|cheatingâ€|" she glowered.

"Butâ€|Team Rocket always cheats, doesn't it?"

I guess she couldn't say anything without bursting, because she didn't say anything.

"Richie! Why don't you go catch something and give it to me?"

"Huh? I didn't tell you my name!"

\_Oopsâ€|\_

--

"Uhâ€|! I saw you on TV! You're really good! Hehâ€|So is that Ashâ€|guy that you're looking forâ€|"

"That was a terrible cover-up," Billie whispered.

\_I know thatâ€|\_



--

"Uhâ€¦So whaddaya say?" I asked.

"I say that we don't have time for this," said Misty, "Come on you guys, let's get going."

She pushed past us and continued on her way. Brock and Richie followed after, with a few glances at Billie and me.

"Wait!" I shouted desperately, "Don't you want to know my secret!?"

"Tom!" Billie stressed.

"You'll like it!! It'll help you find-mmff!"

Billie covered my mouth with her hand and started dragging me away.

"Shut up, kid," she whispered.

"Mmm m mmm mmmm!" I protested.

"â€¦Hold it!" called Richie.

Billie stopped, but she didn't take her hand off my mouth.

"â€¦â€¦Tell us more about thisâ€¦secret."

I yanked myself out of Billie's grip and faced the group excitedly.

"I can help you find-OUCH!!" I whirled around. "\_What was that for!?" I shouted.

"Shut up, you moron!! That's not a secret for them to know!!"

"Iâ€¦don't care!â€¦Iâ€¦I need to get some PokÃ©mon soâ€¦â€¦"

\_â€¦so that I can get Pikachu backâ€¦These guys will help me. I \_know\_ they willâ€¦but first, they have to know who I amâ€¦\_

--

"This isn't the way to do it," she said, "If you're gonna steal PokÃ©mon, do it right. Fight them for it. You can't make them \_give\_ them to you."

"\_I \_can," I said quietly.

"\_I \_don't care."

"â€¦Billieâ€¦â€¦I know these peopleâ€¦" I whispered so only she could hear.

Her eyes widened. "You meanâ€¦?"

I nodded.

"We need to get out of here right away. We can't have them recognizing you," she hissed.

I grabbed her arm. "Billie, I \_want \_them to recognize me!" I hissed back.

"You can't do that! The boss won't trust you!â€|I \_know\_ you don't want that to happenâ€|" She glared at me distinctly.

\_She's rightâ€|\_

--

"â€|Who says he has to find out?"

She blinked. "â€|I'm not going to take part in any conspiracies against the bossâ€|Do you know how much trouble we could get into!?"

"How do you think they came up with that motto?" I grinned.

She sighed, but didn't say anything else.

I turned back to my friends.

"Ahem! Lâ€|ady and gentlemen! I, the greatâ€|\_Tom Ato\_â€|will nowâ€|!"

"\_What?!\_" Misty exclaimed.

I grinned. "I said, I, the great \_Tom Ato\_â€|!"

"It can't beâ€|â€|â€|\_Ash!!!?\_" she asked in disbelief.

Everyone stared at me again.

\_Perfect.\_

--

I paused for dramatic effect and looked at my feet.

"It's about time you figured it out," I muttered, "Now I can take off this stupid wig."

"Wait! Don't do that!" protested Billie.

I ignored her and yanked it off. I tossed it in her direction, and she caught it.

"Whew. What a relief," I sighed.

"Ashâ€|It \_is\_ you!" Brock said in awe.

"Whatâ€|What \_happened\_?" asked Richie.

"â€|\_How dare you worry us all like that!!\_" shouted Misty, "We thought something really bad had happened to you! But instead, you're

running around pretending you're in Team Rocket!"

"â€|â€|I'm not pretendingâ€|"

"\_What\_!?" they said in unison, their jaws dropping.

"That's why I need PokÃ©mon. The boss took all of mine, and he won't give them back unless I trade them with some PokÃ©mon that I steal. So far, I haven't stolen anyâ€|That's why I'd really appreciate it if you'd help me out."

"I can't believe you!" Billie shouted, "You just gave away our biggest secret!"

"I had to!" I shouted back, "They weren't listening to you!"

"You little-!!"

"Hold it!" Brock said.

We stopped and looked at him.

"Ashâ€|are you serious about this?"

I nodded. "That's why I wasn't at the PokÃ©mon battle yesterdayâ€|I got kidnapped."

"By Team Rocket of all peopleâ€|" muttered Misty.

"It wasn't my faultâ€|They trapped me in super glue!"

"\_Huh\_!?"

"Uhâ€|Nevermindâ€|" I blushed.

"So what are you gonna do now?" asked Richie.

"I don't knowâ€|I can't quit until I get my PokÃ©mon backâ€|He's not gonna just give 'em back, either. I have to earn themâ€|"

"Geeâ€|Why didn't you tell us this in the first place?" asked Misty.

I glared at Billie.

"What? Don't look at me," she said.

"\_She\_ didn't want me to," I said, in reply to Misty.

"â€|Oh," said Misty.

"â€|Does this mean you're out of the PokÃ©mon League?" asked Richie.

"No!â€|It just meansâ€|It'll be a while until I get back in itâ€|"

"â€|Ashâ€|â€|I would really like to help you, but I can't just give

my Pok  mon to Team Rocket!" said Misty.

"I know that  "

"We could just catch new ones, like he said before," suggested Brock.

"Really?" I asked hopefully.

"Hey, it could work!" said Richie, "Let's give it a try!"

I got this warm, fuzzy feeling all over me. "Thanks  You guys are the best  "

"We can't just leave Pikachu with Team Rocket!" said Misty, "Of course we're gonna help you!"

I smiled.

I hope none of us have to stay with Team Rocket  

## 6. Best Friends

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 6

### Chapter 6

#### "Best Friends"

We followed them around as they searched for wild Pok  mon. As we walked, I explained to them what had happened in more detail, even the super glue.

"  That's terrible!" Misty said, "I can't believe even Team Rocket would stoop that low!"

"If I had known about that earlier, I would've started looking for you right away," said Richie.

"Thanks guys  " I smiled.

"  What's that?" Billie asked.

"Huh?"

We looked where she was pointing. Instinctively, I reached for my Pok  dex.

"Oh yeah  " I glared at Billie, "I don't have it anymore  "

She shrugged. "Part of being on Team Rocket. Get used to it."

"Huh?" Misty asked in confusion.

"She made me lock up just about all of my stuff," I explained.

"Oh  "

"Uhâ€|guys? Don't we have a bigger problem on our hands?" asked Richie.

"Yeahâ€|I think we've seen this thing beforeâ€|" said Brock.

I looked at it. It was smaller than me, and it did look familiarâ€|The upper part was yellow, and the lower part was brownâ€|

"Oh yeah! Last time we saw one of these, Misty thought that she was a Seel!" I grinned at that memory.

She glared at me, but somehow refrained from hitting me.

"Ashâ€|I'm gonna capture it for you," said Richie, "â€|Whatever it is. Go! Zippo!"

"Char!" Zippo said as it appeared.

"Zippo! Flamethrower attack!"

"CHAAAARR!!"

"Drowzeeâ€|" said the PokÃ©mon.

"Now I remember!" said Brock, "That's Drowzee, the hypnosis PokÃ©mon. It has psychic powers."

"Wow! I bet the boss would love that!" gleamed Billie.

"â€|It's a shame we have to give it to him in the first placeâ€|" I muttered.

Zippo spat out a stream of flame at Drowzee, but Drowzee emitted some kind of psychic waves, and the flame turned straight back for Zippo.

"Char!" it cried in alarm.

Zippo got burnt.

"Manderâ€|" it whimpered.

"Drowzee!" Drowzee said, standing up.

It moved its hands around in a strange pattern, and more psychic waves approached Zippo. Finally, Zippo fell over and started sleeping soundly.

"Oh no! Zippo! Return!"

"It's pretty strongâ€|" I commented.

"I can handle it," said Richie, "Happy! Go!"

"Frreeeee! Frreeeee!" cried Happy.

"Happy! Sleep Powder! Now!"

"Sleep Powder?" asked Misty.

"If it wants to put my Pok  mon to sleep, I don't see why I can't try putting \_it\_ to sleep," replied Richie.

"Butterfreeee!" said Happy.

It flew over Drowzee and lots of tiny blue specks fell from its wings. Drowzee looked up in confusion.

"Drow?  Drow  zee  ?" It blinked sleepily. Then it collapsed and started snoring.

"Great job, Happy! Pok  ball! Go!"

Richie threw a Pok  ball at Drowzee, and it was sucked inside. The Pok  ball wobbled back and forth for a while, but it finally stopped.

"All right! I caught Drowzee!" cried Richie.

"Yeah! Great job!" I congratulated him.

"Um    One question  " said Misty.

"Yeah?" we asked, glancing at her.

"What are you really going to do with it? Don't you need psychic powers to control psychic Pok  mon?"

"We don't have to worry about that," I said, "The boss is the one who's gonna keep it."

"  If you say so  " Misty sighed.

"Happy! Return!"

Happy went back inside its Pok  ball. Richie picked up Drowzee's Pok  ball. Like all of Richie's Pok  balls, it had a yellow star on the red half.

"  You'd better not let this one get mixed up with my other ones," Richie grinned.

"I won't. Don't worry," I assured him.

He handed me the Pok  ball. "Take good care of Taper, okay, Ash?"

I took the Pok  ball from him. "  Taper?" I asked.

He nodded. "I give a nickname to all the Pok  mon I catch."

"Oh  " I grinned. "Don't worry. Taper's safe with me!"

"But just how long are you keeping it, eh, Ash?" Billie reminded me.

I didn't say anything. I didn't want to remember that part. I didn't want to think about what I was going to do to Taper  

"  Do you want us to catch more, or do you want to go ahead and give

Taper to the boss?" asked Brock.

I didn't say anything. I didn't know the answer to that.

"Come on, Ash. Let's go back to the HQ," said Billie.

"But what about these guys?" I asked, gesturing to Brock, Misty, and Richie.

"They'll be fine As long as they don't tell anyone our secret," she said.

"Why not?" asked Misty.

"Huh?" Billie said.

"Why can't we tell anyone?"

"Do you want him to ever get his PokÃ©mon back? The boss isn't going to let him do anything if he knows that the police or someone else knows that Ash is on Team Rocket."

"Really?" I asked.

She nodded. "That's why you shouldn't have even told these guys."

"But I trust them! They're my friends! They won't let me down. Right guys?"

They nodded their agreement.

"See?" I asked Billie.

She shrugged. "Promises are cheap."

"Not for me," I said.

"Same here," said Richie.

Brock nodded.

"I don't break my word either but I won't mention anything about bicycles" Misty said.

I cringed.

Why did she have to bring that up?

--

"Huh?" asked Billie and Richie.

"Don't mind her," I said anxiously.

"Well You guys better keep your mouths shut, if you know what's good for you," Billie concluded. She turned to me. "Let's go Tom."

"Huh?"

She gave me my wig back. "You can't risk being seen without this. Come on."

I sighed and put it on. Then I followed her back to HQ, leaving my friends behind.

\_I hope we know what we're doingâ€|\_ I prayed.

## 7. Promises Are Cheap

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 7

### Chapter 7

"Promises Are Cheap"

Billie knocked on the door to his office.

"Who is it?" he asked angrily.

"Billie and Ash," she answered nervously.

"â€|Come in."

Billie opened the door, and we stepped inside. The door closed behind us.

"M-mission accomplished, sir!" Billie said, saluting. She nudged me, and I saluted too.

"â€|You've caught PokÃ©mon?" he asked.

"O-one, sir," said Billie.

"â€|What is it?"

"It's a Drowzee, sir."

"â€|A Drowzee?"

"Yes, sir."

"â€|Who caught it?"

"Uhâ€|I didâ€|sir," I said uneasily.

"â€|Where is it?" he glowered.

I reached down and pulled it off of my belt. I held it out for him to see.

"Here it isâ€|sir."

He scowled at it. "Who did you take it from?"

"A boyâ€|from the PokÃ©mon Leagueâ€|" said Billie, "â€|He put up a tough fight."



"â€|â€|Congratulations, thenâ€|â€|"

"Do I get my PokÃ©mon back, now?"

He seemed to think about that. "â€|â€|Sure. You can keep the Drowzee."

"\_What!!?\_"

"Collect four more, and I'll see what I can do for you."

"But you said-!!"

He glared at me. "Who is in charge here?"

"Uhhâ€|"

He had a point.

I ducked my head. "You areâ€|sir."

"Precisely. Now get back to work!"

"Yes sir!" we yelled. Billie grabbed my arm, and we got out of there fast.

I couldn't control my temper. "How dare he! He said that he would give me back my PokÃ©mon if I got new ones for him!"

"Ashâ€|"

"That liar! I'll show himâ€|!"

"Ash, calm down."

"He lied! He said I could get my PokÃ©mon back!â€|He's never gonna let that happen, is he?"

"Ashâ€|â€|Come on. You need to calm down."

"You calm down," I grumbled.

"You'll get your PokÃ©mon back. I promise."

I gave her a funny look. "I thought you said promises are cheap."

"They areâ€|â€|but that doesn't mean I can't make them."

I wasn't sure what to make of that.

"Let's go, Ash. We've got to get at least four more PokÃ©mon before anything new happens."

"â€|He shouldn't have changed his mind like thatâ€|"

"â€|How do you know he wasn't planning it like that all along?" Billie asked, "You don't get to be the head of Team Rocket without a scheming mind."

"That's what I hate. I'm not good at scheming. If I was, I probably wouldn't be here right now."

Billie didn't say anything.

We left the headquarters in search of more Pok  mon.

\* \*  
\*

\_Pikachu  |Pidgeotto  |Bulbasaur  |Charizard  |Squirtle  |Muk  |I'm probably never going to see them again  |\_

--

I sighed. Things weren't going so great. All the Pok  mon that we'd seen were ones that Billie said the boss wouldn't be interested in.

"  |  |Don't get so down, Ash. Everything's gonna work out."

Billie was trying to cheer me up. That was really nice of her, but it wasn't working.

"If you say so," I sighed.

She stopped walking and put her hands on her hips. "Are you gonna be like this the whole time? If you keep acting this way, there's no way you'll get the boss to give you back your Pok  mon. He wants Team Rocket to like what they're doing. He wants team members that are loyal to Team Rocket, and only to Team Rocket. He's just doing this to you to make sure that understand that he holds all the power, and there's no way that you can resist him."

"  |  |  |No way that I can resist him?" I asked.

She nodded.

I had an idea creeping into my head.

"  |We'll see about that  |" I sneered.

"  |Don't do anything stupid," she warned me.

"Oh  |don't worry about me. I'll be fine."

She looked as if she didn't believe me, but she didn't say anything. She blinked.

"Uh  |Ash?"

"What?"

"Look behind you."

I turned around.

"Magne. Mite."

"Yaahhhhghghhh!!!!" I exclaimed as I was suddenly

Thundershocked.

"Ow!" I said, as I stepped back, "What was that for!?" I demanded.

"Mag. Magnemite."

"Rrâ€|I'll show youâ€|Go-!â€|â€|Umâ€|"

\_â€|I only have two choicesâ€|\_

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing," I said quickly, "Go! Taper!"

"Drowzeeâ€|" said Taper.

"Ash! You can't control a psychic PokÃ©mon!" cried Billie.

"That doesn't mean I can't try. Taper! Uhâ€|Hypnosis attack!"

"Zee?"

"Uh-oh."

"Mite!"

Magnemite released another Thundershock, only this time, it was aimed at Taper.

"Taper!" I cried.

"Ddrroowwwwzeeee!" it called out in pain.

"Taper! Return!" I ordered.

"â€|Your other PokÃ©mon should be strong against this one," said Billie.

"Huh?"

"Don't you know? Ground types are strong against electric types."

\_I don't even know what my other PokÃ©mon isâ€|\_

--

"Go!â€|" I played it safe and didn't use a name.

"Sssandshrew!!"

"A Sandshrew?" I said in surprise.

"â€|You \_did\_ know that, didn't you?" Billie asked me.

"Uhâ€|of course."

"Magne. Mite!"

Magnemite used another Thunder Shock, but it didn't affect Sandshrew.

"This should be an easy match," Billie said.

\_I hope soâ€|\_

--

"Sandshrew!" I called, "Useâ€|Fury Swipes!"

"Sshrew!" it exclaimed.

It jumped up and slashed rapidly at the Magnemite.

"Magâ€|Magneâ€|Magnemiteâ€|" Magnemite cringed.

"Sand! Sandshrew!" yapped Sandshrew.

"MIIIIIIIIIIITTTTTTEEEEEE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" Magnemite suddenly let out an piercing Screech that caused Sandshrew to stop attacking and cover its ears.

"Sandshrew!" it cried, although I could barely hear it over Magnemite.

Billie and I covered our ears too.

"Ow! That noise \_hurts\_" Billie exclaimed.

"No kidding!" I replied, having to shout to be heard.

Finally, much to everyone's relief, it stopped.

"Magnemite!" it cried, and Tackled Sandshrew, who had let down its guard.

"Shrew!" it grunted, as it was knocked to the ground.

"Mite!" Magnemite flew in for another hit.

"Watch out, Sandshrew! Counter with Slash attack!"

"Sand! Shrew!!!"

Sandshrew pulled itself up, then swiped at Magnemite with its small, but very tough claws.

"Maaagâ€|!" Magnemite cried. It fell to the ground with a soft thud.  
"Magneâ€|miteâ€|"

"PokÃ©ball! Go!"

The PokÃ©ball hit Magnemite, and it was easily caught after only a couple of wobbles.

"We did it! We caught Magnemite!"

"Way to go, Ash! I \_told\_ you, you could do it."

I blushed. "Yeah, wellâ€|"

"â€|I wonder if the boss will like a wild PokÃ©monâ€|?"

"â€|â€|He didn't like Taper."

"Wellâ€|"

"Do you think we should ask him, anyway?"

"â€|It's worth a try."

## 8. Reality Check

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 8

A/N: I'm sorry it took me so long to post this. I actually had nine chapters pre-written when I posted the first one, and I've written much more. So don't worry about that. I was just having some trouble getting on the internet. I don't think it will take me so long anymore, so don't worry about that. For now, enjoy! \*^\_^\*

### Chapter 8

"Reality Check"

Billie knocked on the door to his officeâ€|again.

"Who is it?"

"Billie and Ash," she replied.

"â€|Come in."

She opened the door and we stepped inside.

"We caught another PokÃ©mon, sir!" Billie said.

"What is it this time?" he asked.

"A Magnemite," I said proudly.

He stared at me. "â€|A Magnemite?"

"Uh-huh," I said, nodding.

There was a pause. Suddenly, he stood up and slammed his fist on the desk. "Is that the best you can do!?" he roared, "First you bring me a Drowzee, and now you give me a worthless \_Magnemite\_!?"

"Uhâ€|"

"Get out of here, and next time, try to bring back something \_rare\_!"

"Hey, wait a sec!" I shouted back, "Drowzees are rare! And they're

psychic, too! What's wrong with them?"

"I don't \_need\_ any psychic Pok  mon! I want \_rare\_ ones!"

"Magnemites  |Aren't common  |" Billie said timidly.

He turned his fearsome gaze on her. "Are you arguing with me?" he demanded.

"N-no  |You're  |right  |as always  |" she cowered.

"Tell that to your partner. He seems to need a reality check."

"Y-yes  |sir  |"

"You can't just bully people around like that!" I said, "You're the one who needs a reality check!"

"  |See what I mean?"

"Yes, sir," Billie nodded. "Let's go, Ash."

"I'm not done with him, yet!" I turned to the boss. "And what about my Pok  mon? What are you doing to them? Why aren't you giving them back to me!?"

He ignored me.

"Let's \_go\_, Ash," she dragged me out of the room, and shut the door behind us.

"What was that for!!?" we asked each other at the same time.

"You can't talk back to the boss like that!" she told me angrily.

"You can't let him bully you around like that!" I countered.

"Ash  |Please listen to me. You don't want to learn the hard way. Trust me."

"Why should I trust you? You're part of Team Rocket!"

"You are too!"

"So? At least I don't let him boss me around the way you do!"

"That's because you don't know him well enough yet  |He has power, Ash. Power that no one can beat  |"

I scowled at her. She seemed pretty serious  |

"Hmph."

\_I can handle anything  |\_

--

\* \* \*

I snuck out of bed that night. I made sure that Billie was sound asleep, then I left the room. There was no way the 'boss' could keep me from my Pokémon.

\_He wants us to be thieves, so I don't see why he should get mad at me for thisâ€|\_

--

I tiptoed down the hall. I needed to find the room where they kept the Pokémon. I knew there was an entrance in the boss's office, but I wasn't sure if it was a good idea to sneak in there.

\_I'm sure there's another entranceâ€|\_

--

I quickly found the door to his office. If I remembered right, the Pokémon were held in a room to the rightâ€|I looked to the right. Sure enough, there was a door over there. A blinking green and red light was on the wall next to it. I tiptoed towards it, and examined the keypad.

"Enter access codeâ€|" I read to myself.

\_Uh-oh. What's the access code? Did Billie tell me anything about that?\_

--

I thought back to when Billie was telling me all the basic rules of Team Rocket.

\_No, I don't think she mentioned an access code anytimeâ€|Now what do I do?â€|I know! Maybe one of my Pokémon can help.\_

--

"Magnemite," I whispered softly, "Come out, but be quiet about it."

Magnemite emerged out of its Pokéball and hovered silently.

"Good," I whispered, "See if you can do anything to get this door open, but be as quiet as possible."

It nodded and turned to the keypad. It started humming softly. It reached one of its magnets to the keypad, and electricity crackled and sparked. I glanced around in alarm, but no one else seemed to have heard. When I looked back, Magnemite was done.

"Is that it?" I asked quietly.

It nodded.

I held out its Pokéball. "Return," I said, still keeping quiet. It

went back in.

I put it away, then looked at the keypad.

#^%#\$~!#####@#( #, it said.

\_How rude.\_

--

I pushed the door gently. It slid open. I peered inside.

The room was dark, but I could still make out row after row, after row, after row, after row, of PokÃ©balls.

"â€|Wowâ€|" I whispered.

\_How am I going to find \_my\_ PokÃ©mon out of all these?\_

--

I walked inside, and closed the door shut behind me.

\_I hope I can get outta here once I'm doneâ€|\_

--

I looked at the closest row of PokÃ©balls.

\_They all look exactly the sameâ€|â€|Maybeâ€|â€|\_

--

"Taper," I whispered, "Please, be quiet when you come out."

I let it out of its PokÃ©ball.

"Drowâ€|" it said.

"Sh," I whispered, "I need you to help me find my PokÃ©mon. You can use your psychic powers to figure out which ones are mine, right?"

It looked up at me and blinked.

"Please, Taper. I need your help. Please."

"Drowâ€|"

It turned and started walking away.

"Hey! Where are you going?" I hissed. I followed it.

Taper stopped in front of a shelf of PokÃ©balls and looked up.

"Drowzee."

I looked up.



"Huh? Are they up there?" I asked.

It looked over its shoulder and nodded.

"Drowzee."

\_I wish I had Bulbasaur with me!\_

--

"Taper, can you use your psychic powers to bring them down here?" I asked.

It blinked at me, then looked back up. I looked up too.

Six of the Pokéballs became surrounded by a blue light. They wiggled around, then started to float off of the shelf, and down towards me. I caught them and laughed, quietly.

"Glad to have you guys back," I whispered, "Taper, return."

Taper reentered its own Pokéball.

While I was trying to figure out which Pokéball held Pikachu, another Pokéball on the shelf opened up.

I looked up in surprise. "Huh?"

"Tentacruel!!"

"Yah!" I exclaimed.

\_How did that thing get out?\_

--

Another Pokéball shook around, then it opened too.

"Marowak!"

"Yikes!"

\_What is going on?\_

--

"Magnetron!"

"A Magnetron?" I said in surprise.

\_No wonder he didn't want my Magnemite!\_

--

I looked around. They had me surrounded, and they didn't look too happy with me interrupting their sleep.

"Uh!" I quavered.

"Cruel!!" roared Tentacruel, disturbing the silence that I had tried so hard to preserve.

It came towards me, tentacles extended and ready.

"Maro!" yelled Marowak. It tossed its bone club at me.

"Mmagg!!" said Magnetron. Electricity crackled from its magnets, then shot towards me.

\_This doesn't look too goodâ€|\_

--

All of the attacks hit at once. Tentacruel launched a volley of Poison Stings, Marowak's Bonemerang knocked me squarely on the side of my head, and my entire body was wracked with electricity.

"EENNNAAAAAGHHHHHH!!!" I cried out.

When it was over, I fell to the ground, gasping for breath. I think Tentacruel managed to poison meâ€|

I glanced up fearfully. They weren't through with me yet.

I looked down. I didn't want to be watching when they \_did\_ get through with me.

I cringed, as Tentacruel lashed at me with its tentacles, Marowak pounded me with its Bone Club, and Magnemite used Swift on me. I just wanted it to end. Somehowâ€|pleaseâ€|

"Enough!"

It seemed too unreal. They stopped. Scared, I looked up, wondering who could control these PokÃ©mon like that.

Something jabbed me in the ribs and rolled me over. That's when I saw none other thanâ€|

"Boss?" I asked in surprise.

"Well, well, well. If it isn't Ash Ketchum, of all the people who would try to rob Team Rocketâ€|You didn't expect it to be \_easy\_ did you?"

"Umâ€|"

I was really in too much pain to understand what was going on.

"Being the head of the world's most powerful criminal organization, I know how to stop crime, just as well as I know how to start it. I knew no one would expect the very things that they were trying to steal would attack them. Especially with the access pad next to the door, they would assume that that was the only security system. Wellâ€|as you can plainly tell, that isn't the only security system I've rigged up."

I only groaned in response.

He laughed. "That makes senseâ€¦ You understand perfectly how it is impossible to outwit me, Ash Ketchum. And it is just as impossible to overpower me with pure force." He gestured to the roomful of PokÃ©balls. "I can counter any attack with an unstoppable collection of PokÃ©mon. Not even the strongest PokÃ©mon Masters would challenge me to an all-out battle."

I coughed, then winced, because that hurt.

He looked at me suspiciously.

"What's wrong?" he asked, "You're quieter than usual."

"Tenta! Cruel!" said Tentacruel.

He nodded. "I see. My Tentacruel poisoned you, eh? Hmâ€¦ Serves you right. You shouldn't go poking around where you don't belong. You won't be so careless next time, will you?"

I shook my head.

He laughed. "I thought soâ€¦" He looked down at me, then at his three PokÃ©mon. "Tentacruel, Marowak, and Magneton. Back in your PokÃ©balls."

They nodded and did as he said.

"As for youâ€¦â€¦"

\_What else can he do to me?\_

--

"â€¦ I like you. You have spirit. You won't take no for an answer. You take matters into your own hands. That's the kind of people that we need in Team Rocket."

\_Now what is he blabbering about?\_

--

"Howeverâ€¦"

\_Uh-oh.\_

--

"You did directly disobey an order from me. I can't let crimes like that go unpunished. I have to keep order and loyalty a strong part of Team Rocket."

\_â€¦ Huh?\_

--

"â€¦ You weren't thinking of just taking your PokÃ©mon and leaving, were you?"

I didn't answer him.

"â€|â€|Just as I thought. You thought you could just walk away, didn't you?"

\_â€|Silence is goldenâ€|\_

--

"â€|â€|Here."

He dropped a small bottle next to me. I read the label.

Antidote.

\_That's good. At least I won't be poisoned anymoreâ€|but how can I trust him?\_

--

He waited impatiently. "Well, are you going to use it or not?"

I reached out and uncapped it. Then I sprayed it on myself. I felt a little better, but I was still bruised and cut all over.

"Now, get up. I have someone who wants to see youâ€|You want to be presentable, don't you?"

"â€|Who is it?" I asked, not trying to get up.

"Well, you'll find out. Now get up."

I dragged myself into a sitting position and stared up at him.

"Who is it?" I asked again.

"You'll seeâ€|All the way up."

Since he wasn't offering any help, I put my hands on the floor and pushed myself up. I grabbed onto a nearby shelf for support, then weakly managed to stand on my own.

He took a PokÃ©ball out from under his jacket.

\_Jacket? But it's the middle of the night!\_

--

"Come out!" he said, letting the PokÃ©mon out.

"Ch-AAAARRRRRRR!!!!!"

"Charizard!?"

It looked down at me. Those eyesâ€|That faceâ€|That Charizard was mine!

"Châ€|Charizard?" I said again.

\_Wait a sec. Taper gave me six PokÃ©balls. If Charizard wasn't one of them, then who's in the other one?\_

--

I didn't have much time to worry about that though.

"Charizard, do you recognize this boy?" the boss asked.

Charizard looked at him and nodded.

He smiled. "Goodâ€¦ Think of him as your personal training dummyâ€¦"

"What!?" I yelped.

Charizard looked back at me. I saw it grin.

"â€¦ Charizard?" I asked weakly.

It opened its mouth and took a deep breath.

I gulped and shut my eyes very tightly. It exhaled. You know the rest.

## 9. Patching Up

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 9

### Chapter 9

#### "Patching Up"

Charizard's "training session", as far as I remembered, was nothing but a painful blur of flames and claws. I must've passed out, because the next thing I knew, I was waking upâ€¦

I moaned and groggily looked around. I was on a bed, in some unfamiliar roomâ€¦

"Per?"

I blinked and my eyes gradually focused on a light tan cat sitting next to me. It had a red jewel on its forehead.

"Perrrsian?" it asked.

"Uhhhâ€¦â€¦.Huh?" I said.

"Perâ€¦ Sian!" It jumped off the bed and trotted away.

I craned my neck to see where it was going, but I could barely move without hurting myself.

A moment later, the head of Team Rocket entered the room and approached me. He looked at me critically for a few seconds before speaking.

"So you finally decided to wake up!"

"I never wanted to sleep in the first place," I croaked, surprising myself with the hoarseness of my voice.

He coughed. "Well, you did inhale a lot of smoke. Not to mention the fact that you suffered serious burns and cuts!"

"That's not my fault!" I argued.

"Yes it is. If you hadn't snuck in there in the first place, I wouldn't have had to punish you."

"If you hadn't taken my Pok  mon, I wouldn't have had to try to steal them back from you!" I retorted roughly.

He shrugged. "You're in Team Rocket. I wouldn't expect any less from you."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Team Rocket are thieves. We steal to get what we want."

"I'm not one of you," I said darkly.

He laughed to himself. "You try stealing from me, and then tell me that you're not a thief? Are you trying to say that you can't do any wrong?"

"I'm not like you."

He laughed again. "I think that's debatable!"

He was getting on my nerves.

"What about my Pok  mon? You didn't take them back, did you?"

"Of course I did!" he said, "You haven't earned them back yet. Besides, you only need three for your next assignment."

--

"What are you talking about?" I asked cautiously.

"If you're going to compete in the Pok  mon League, you're going to have to act as if you obey all the rules."

\_What the? Compete in the Pok  mon League? But I thought-!\_

--

"What?"

"Ash, do you realize what a big step it would be if a member of Team Rocket and a \_new\_ one at that, competed in the Pok  mon League and won?"

"Oh, I get it. The only reason you want me to compete is so you can get more power for yourself," I said dryly.

"Exactly. See, I knew I was making a good decision when I initiated you."

I looked away. He had just shattered my lifelong dream. What good was becoming a Pokémon Master if it was only going to help Team Rocket? I sighed. Things weren't going my way

"When you're feeling better, I want you to meet up with Billie in your room. Your assignment, return to Indigo Plateau. You might want to change back to your old clothes, because I don't know if they'll let a known Team Rocket member compete"

\_Great. He's using me

--

"Persian, make sure he does that."

"Per. Sian."

"Good. Till we meet again"

Persian jumped back onto the bed and sniffed at my hair.

"Uh! Stop that" I said, pushing it away.

I rolled over to see it better. It sat down and stared at me curiously.

"What are you looking at?" I asked.

"Per?" it said, cocking its head.

I sighed. "This should be interesting"

\_I'm stuck in bed with a cat who I can't understand\_Great. Life is going really well for me at the moment

--

\* \* \*

"Ash! Are you okay? What \_happened\_ to you?" Billie asked incredulously as she saw me for the first time that day.

She had a reason to be concerned. My clothes were scorched and ripped, and I had bandages stuck to my head, arms, legs, and body.

"I\_had\_ a little run-in with a vengeful Charizard" I sighed.

She looked me up and down with wide eyes. "Geez\_You look terrible."

"Tell me about it\_I \_feel\_ that way too"

"You should really, um\_get cleaned up\_uh\_and changed"

Yeah\_I could never go out in public with clothes in this

stateâ€|

--

"I think I'll do thatâ€|â€|Um, Billie?"

"Yeah, Ash?"

"Didâ€|the boss tell you about our new assignment?"

"What new assignment?"

I guess that answers my questionâ€|

--

"Uhâ€|We're supposed to head over to the Indigo Plateauâ€|He wants me to compete again."

"What? After all the trouble he went through to get you out of it?"

I nodded, then winced. That action had disturbed a cut on the back of my neck.

"Yeahâ€|He said it would help Team Rocket out, or something like thatâ€|Well, I'll meet you in the lobby when I'm done, okay?"

She nodded. "Okay."

\* \* \*

â€|You know that guy in the mirror? You know, the one who supposedly looks exactly like you? Wellâ€|that guyâ€|in my mirrorâ€|he was in pretty bad shapeâ€|

I had taken off all of my bandages so I could replace them with clean ones. The old ones were a deep shade of redâ€|

The guy in the mirror had a red cut across the right side of his forehead, and then some more on his left cheekâ€|His whole face was searedâ€|

I looked down at my hands. It was more of the same. I had too many cuts to count, and they were all burnt to an ugly blackened sight.

I decided that the sooner I patched myself up, the better. I doused the bandages in hyper potion before applying them. Even though hyper potion was designed for PokÃ©mon, humans had used it before and it had the same kind of effect on them.

When I was done with that, I put on my normal clothes, with the exception of my hat, picked up my backpack, and left the room.

I found Billie waiting for me in the lobby, just like we'd planned.

"Got everything?" she asked.

"Yeahâ€|Let's go to the Indigo Plateau!"



We left the Team Rocket headquarters, for what I hoped was the last time, and went in search of my other friends, so we could all go back to Indigo Plateau, together.

It didn't take too long to find them actually. We just headed to the Pok mon center, and they were sitting next to the nearby fountain.

"Misty! Brock! Richie!" I called.

They looked up in surprise.

"Ash!?"

They ran to greet us. They too, were mystified by my wounds.

"What \_happened\_ to you, Ash?" Misty asked.

"  Charizard," I answered.

She just blinked.

"Ash, how come you're not wearing your Team Rocket uniform anymore?" Richie asked.

I winced. "Well, uh  See, the boss doesn't want me to  "

"Huh?"

"What?"

"Let me finish. He wants me to go back to Indigo Plateau and finish up what I started  "

"You mean you're still gonna compete?" Richie asked.

"Yep  Only  " I trailed off.

"  Only \_what\_, Ash?" asked Misty.

"Only    I'm supposed to be doing this for Team Rocket      But I'm not gonna let that stop me! I'm still going to do my best!  Just like I promised  "

Richie smiled. "I knew you would keep your promise  You're just a little late, that's all."

"Yeah  A little time never hurt anybody," I said.

"Actually, it can," said Brock, "and it's not like you were gone for a \_little\_ while too. It's been two whole days already! We'd better hurry back before they give up on you!"

"Oh  right," I said, blushing.

Just then, a truck pulled up next to us. The window rolled down, and  \_Jessie\_ poked her head out.

"Heya, twerps," she said, "Need a lift to Indigo Plateau?"

"Uhâ€|"

James said something from the driver's seat. "The boss wanted us to give you a ride, and we were just going there anywayâ€|"

"So get in! Now!" added Meowth.

"Let's go," Billie said.

I sighed.

\_Not another ride in their truckâ€|\_

## 10. Bittersweet Return

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 10

### Chapter 10

#### "Bittersweet Return"

It was a long, bumpy, and uncomfortable ride back to the Indigo Plateau. When we finally got there, Jessie, James, and Meowth let us out.

"Be careful, twerp," Jessie told me, "If you lose this competition, the boss won't be happy with you."

\_That's not what I'm worried aboutâ€|\_

--

"â€|I'll be careful," I said.

"You'd better. Because if you win, that means that everyone in the whole world will respect Team Rocket!" James said.

\_That's not good.\_

--

"Shut up, you guys," Misty said. She turned to me. "Just do your best, Ash. I know you can do it. Don't worry about anyone else. Do this for yourselfâ€|It's your dream, isn't it?"

\_Yeahâ€|â€|Itâ€|\_was\_ my dreamâ€|â€|I'm not so sure about that anymoreâ€|\_

--

"I'll do fine," I said, hoping that would get them to shut up.

"We'd better tell the officials that you're here," Richie said, "They're still out looking for you. Once they see that you're okay, the tournament can start up again."

"â€|Good luck, Ash," said Billie.

"You're gonna need more than luck!" Misty grinned, "â€|Come on. Let's hurry up and get this over with."

"We'll be watchingâ€|from a distanceâ€|" Jessie said, "Uhâ€|We can't give away your littleâ€|secret, now can we?â€|Billie, that goes for you too."

Billie gave her a dangerous look. "I'll watch from wherever I please. Don't think you're the only ones that know how to put on a disguise."

Billie changed her clothes inside of Team Rocket's truck. When she came out, she was wearing a dark red-purple shirt and black jeans. Then we, with the exception of Jessie, James, and Meowth, headed towards the main building.

\* \* \*

"Excuse meâ€|" Richie said to the lady at the counter, "Umâ€|We found Ash."

"â€|What?" she asked.

"We found Ash. He's here right now."

Richie pointed at me. I waved shyly.

"Huh? Butâ€|â€|Oh!! You mean-!â€|That's great!! Ash! You're okay!"

"Uh-huhâ€|" I said.

"Let me tell Mr. Goodshow. You guys don't know what a relief this is. Thank you so much!"

I laughed nervously.

She picked up a phone and started dialing a number. Then she looked back at us.

"You can go to your cabin now, if you want. I'll let you know what time your match will be. Don't be late!" She gave me a meaningful glance.

"You won't have to worry about that," I said, "I'll be early this time."

"Huh. You'd better be," Misty said.

We walked back to our hotel room. It seemed like such a long time since I'd been here. I noticed that some people were staring at us as we walked past, then they would turn and whisper to each other. It was reallyâ€|unsettling.

Misty opened the door and let us in. I don't know why, but I hung to the back.

"Who is it?" I heard Professor Oak call.

"It's us!" Misty replied, "And you'll never guess who's with us!"

"Huh?"

First, Professor Oak, then my mom came through the door to the next room. Their faces wore expressions of surprise, then happiness. Mom rushed to me right away and squeezed me as tight as she could.

"Oh! Ash!! I was so worried!! Ohâ€¦I thoughtâ€¦"

"Momâ€¦" I gasped, "Mom, I can't breatheâ€¦"

She held me out to look at me.

"Ashâ€¦"

She wasâ€¦She was cryingâ€¦

I couldn't think of anything to say.

"Ash Ketchumâ€¦Don't you \_dare\_ let that happen again!! I was so scaredâ€¦I thought thatâ€¦Iâ€¦â€¦" She choked up and just hugged me again, not as tight this time. I hugged her back.

"I'm okayâ€¦It's okay, Momâ€¦I'm fine."

She touched my bandages.

"Whatâ€¦ happened to you?" she asked softly.

"â€¦Nothingâ€¦â€¦It's okay. It's not as bad as it looksâ€¦"

Actually, it was worse, but she didn't need to know that.

"I missed you."

"Me too."

"â€¦â€¦â€¦I can't take it anymoreâ€¦" I heard Billie whisper, "That is just so \_sweet\_!"

Misty giggled. "Yeahâ€¦â€¦"

There was a moment of silence, then she let go of me.

"Ash, you are going to apologize to everybody for making them wait and worry all this time! Do you know how anxious everyone was!?"

"Uhâ€¦Wellâ€¦" I blushed.

"There'll be time for that later," Professor Oak said gently, "For now, let's just be happy that he's back."

"Yeahâ€¦"

\* \* \*

"So what Pokémon are you going to use against Richie?" Misty asked me.

After everyone had settled down, Richie had gone to his own cabin, Billie had decided to stay with us, and now we were just sort of sitting around.

"Sandshrew, Taper, and Magnemite."

She blinked. "Huh!? But those aren't your strongest!"

"They're the only ones I have."

"Ash"

I looked up.

"What?"

"You're going to need more than luck to win."

"I know that."

"Do you think you can win?"

\_I don't know if \_want\_ to win\_ Not until I can get out of Team Rocket.\_

--

I sighed. "I don't know\_ It wouldn't be that bad if I lost though\_"

She sat up. "What!? What are you talking about!?"

I looked away. She wouldn't understand.

"Ash! We're talking about the Pokémon League Championship here! You can't just not care!"

"I don't have to care if I don't want to\_ The truth is, I'm kinda hoping I'll lose."

"\_What\_!!!? Ash, have you gone \_mad\_!? What about your dream??"

"Misty\_ If I win\_ then I won't have won\_ for myself\_ or Pallet\_ or anyone\_ that matters\_ I'll have won for Team Rocket\_ and I don't want to do that\_ Maybe I should forfeit."

Misty stood up and put her hands on her hips.

"Ash Ketchum, you are going to battle Richie, and you are going to fight your hardest\_ It's already taken you this long to get back here. You're going to fight for yourself, okay? That's all that matters. Forget about Team Rocket. They're not important. You hear

me?"

I sighed.

\_I hear you Mistyâ€|â€|but how can I just forget about Team Rocket?  
Afterâ€|â€|â€|\_

--

"Ash, did you hear me?"

"â€|â€|Yes."

"Are you going to do your best, or what?"

\_â€|Or what.\_

--

"â€|I'll try."

\* \* \*

\_I wish I at least had Pikachu with meâ€|\_

--

"We're counting on you, twerp, so you'd better win!" Jessie  
said.

"Yeah! The reputation of Team Rocket lies on your shoulders!" Meowth  
added.

"Win, win, win!" James said enthusiastically.

\_â€|I wish these guys would leave me alone.\_

--

Billie put her hand on my shoulder.

"Don't worry about them, Ash. They don't know what they're talking  
about."

I raised an eyebrow.

"Oh, and you do?"

"â€|I'm not making any promises." She smiled.

I couldn't help but smile back.

"â€|Thanks."

"No prob. Just do what you think is right."

\_That's not a bad idea.\_

--

"Iâ€¦I think I'll do thatâ€¦"

Brock looked at us thoughtfully. "Are you guys done yet? Ash has a match to get to."

I looked at him. "Yeahâ€¦I'm ready."

"Good. Your fans are expecting you to show up this time. They've already waited long enough."

"Hehâ€¦You'veâ€¦got a point there."

## 11. Friend And Foe Alike

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 11

### Chapter 11

"Friend And Foe Alike"

I stepped out into the stadium. For the first time, Pikachu wasn't with me.

\_I miss you, Pikachuâ€¦\_

--

\_"And now folks!! Here he is! The one you've all been waiting for! Ash Ketchum!!"\_

--

\_Pikachuâ€¦â€¦I'llâ€¦â€¦I'll win this battleâ€¦â€¦for youâ€¦\_

--

The referee walked into the spotlight after giving me  
aâ€¦strangeâ€¦glance.

"This will be a three-on-three battle! No time limit!  
Beginâ€¦now!"

\_â€¦Which PokÃ©mon should I useâ€¦?\_

--

I froze as I realized I didn't know the answer.

Richie did though.

"Happy! Go!!"

\_Happy? Iâ€¦I should use something strong against itâ€¦unless I want  
to loseâ€¦â€¦Do I want to lose?\_

--

I blinked.

"Come on, Ash! You have to send out a Pokémon!" Richie called out.

"He's right!"

--

"Send out a Pokémon, immediately!" said the ref.

"I should choose a Pokémon!"

--

"Uh...I...I uh...I choose...um...Oh! I know! Magnemite! Go!"

"Mmmagnemittte!!"

"Happy! Confusion!!"

"Magnemite!! Tackle attack!"

"Mmmmmite!"

Magnemite slammed into Happy, who then began flapping its wings and flashing brilliant colored light, which started to confuse Magnemite.

"Magnemite! Thundershock!"

"Happy! Whirlwind!"

Happy whirled its wings and blew Magnemite backwards.

"Tackle attack!"

"MagneMite!!"

Magnemite Tackled Butterfree, knocking it backwards a little.

"Happy! Poison Powder!" shouted Richie.

"Thundershock!" I said.

"Magne!"

"Fffrrreeeee!!!"

Happy released a sparkling green powder over Magnemite, and it was poisoned.

"No!" I breathed.

"Mag..." Magnemite gasped. I could tell that it was really hurting.

"Come on!" I whispered.

"MagneMagne!"



"Psybeam!" shouted Richie.

"Magnetite!!!!!!!!!"

Magnetite suddenly shocked Happy with a powerful Thunder Shock. Happy was stunned for a second, as electricity still flowed through its body, then it fell to the ground.

"Magne," Magnetite sighed.

The referee examined Happy, then he raised the green flag.

"Butterfree has been eliminated! The battle goes to Magnetite!"

Richie held out a Pokéball. "Happy! Return!" He put Happy back on his belt, then took out another Pokéball. "Zippo! I choose you!"

"Magne, mite!" Magnetite sighed weakly. It was starting to hover lower and lower.

\_The poison!\_

--

"Char!!"

"Zippo! Flamethrower attack, now!!"

"Char! Chaaaarrrrrr!!!!!!!!!"

Zippo breathed out a huge breath of fire, and when Magnetite became visible, it was clear it wasn't going to be able to complete the match.

"Magne!" it squeaked, then fell to the ground with a clang.

"Magne! Magnetite has been eliminated! The battle goes to Charmander!"

"Char, char!" Zippo cheered.

"Magne! Magnetite! Return!"

"Both trainers are now down to two Pokémon each! What Pokémon will Ash choose to battle Richie's Charmander?" the announcer said.

\_I wish I knew!\_ I thought to myself. \_Which Pokémon would be best against Charmander? Sandshrew, probably, but if it loses then I'll have to rely on Taper! It's best to use it now and get it out of the way!\_ I decided.

"Taper! I choose you!!"

I threw its Pokéball, and Taper appeared from inside.

"Drowzee, drowâ€|" it said.

"I'm counting on you, Taper," I whispered.

Taper looked back at me quizzically.

"Drowzee?"

\_I wish I could understand youâ€|\_

--

Why wouldn't you be able to understand me?

I yelped and glanced around in confusion. What had just happened?

It's me, Ash. Taper. You can hear me, can't you?

I stared at it. I nodded fearfully.

Thenâ€|why wouldn't you understand me?

"Iâ€|can't understand you when you're talking normally," I whispered.

Taper looked thoughtful.

"Drow zee, drowdrow?"

\_ 'Can you understand me now?' \_

--

I nodded.

"Drowzee!"

\_ 'Then let's finish up this battle!' \_

--

"â€|Yeahâ€|"

"Zippo! Slash attack!"

"Charâ€|Man!!"

Zippo started running towards Taper.

It's strange to be fighting against the trainer that caught meâ€|

I gulped.

\_That's because you're not supposed to be mineâ€|\_

--

"Drowâ€| zeeâ€|"

\_ 'Soâ€¦should I counterattack?' \_

- -

"Uhâ€¦yeah, that'd be a good ideaâ€¦Umâ€¦Taper!  
Uhâ€¦"

"Zee?"

\_ 'Pound attack?' \_

- -

"â€¦Sure."

"Manderrr!!!"

Zippo Slashed Taper viciously, and Taper was only able to block with its arms, which resulted in them getting very cut up.

"Now!"

"Drrowzee!"

Taper punched Zippo in the head.

"Ch-ar, mander!!" Zippo yelped in pain.

"Zippo! Fire Spin!!" shouted Richie.

"Charâ€¦â€¦.MANDER!!!!"

Zippo breathed out a tornado of fire which quickly engulfed Taper and burned it.

"Taper!" I gasped.

â€¦That hurt.

"I'm sure it didâ€¦!"

Things weren't looking so good. I needed a way to win.

Maybe it's time for another attack?

"Uhâ€¦Yeah, that sounds good."

"â€¦Who are you talking to, Ash!?"

I glanced back to see Misty, Brock, and Billie staring at me. It was Misty who had asked the question though.

"Umâ€¦â€¦Taperâ€¦Who else?"

"Did Taper say something to you?" she asked.

"Uhâ€¦Of course! I wouldn't have been talking to it if it didn't!"

I turned my attention back to the battle, now that that was out of the way.

"Flamethrower! Now!!"

"Taper! Disable attack!"

"Drowwwâ€|"

Before it could say 'zee', Zippo breathed out and overcooked Taper.

"â€|zeeâ€|"

\_'â€|owâ€|'\_

--

"â€|Taper! Return!"

I held out its PokÃ©ball, and Taper went back inside. I took out Sandshrew's PokÃ©ball.

\_'I'm counting on you, Sandshrewâ€|You're my last hope.\_'

--

"Sandshrew! Go!"

I tossed the PokÃ©ball, and Sandshrew popped out eagerly.

"Sandshrew!"

"Noâ€|" Richie gasped.

\_"This is a surprise, folks!"\_ the announcer commented, \_"In this battle, Ash Ketchum has used none of the PokÃ©mon that we've all become so familiar with from his earlier battles! Looks like things are heating up for Richie!"\_

--

\_'â€|Something like that.\_'

--

"Sandshrew! Poison Sting!"

"Ssand!"

Sandshrew jumped forward, then stung Zippo, poisoning it.

"Urghâ€|Zippo! Flamethrower attack!!"

"Chaaaaarrrr!!!"

I held my breath

"â€|Sandshrew! Sand-Attack!"

"Sand!!!"

Sandshrew just absorbed the flames and kicked sand up into Zippo's eyes. Zippo abruptly stopped its attack and rubbed at its eyes.

"Charâ€|manâ€|Charmander!"

"Zippo!" Richie cried.

"â€|Sandshrew! Fury Swipes!"

"Sand, shrrreww!!"

Sandshrew slashed at Zippo over and over again with its sharp little claws. Finally, Zippo couldn't take it any longer.

"â€|Charmander has been eliminated!" announced the ref, "The battle goes to Sandshrew!"

"Noâ€|â€|Zippo, return!"

\_The only other PokÃ©mon he can use is a Pikachuâ€|\_ I realized suddenly, \_It's gonna be hard for him to winâ€|â€|That's not goodâ€|\_

--

Richie took out one last PokÃ©ball. He stared at it soulfully for a long moment, then gripped it tight and stared out at me. I could see it in his eyes. He was still going to try his best and not give up till the end. He wasn't going to break his promise.

\_I shouldn't have thought about breaking mineâ€|\_

--

"Sparky, go! I'm counting on you!"

"Pikaâ€|!"

"Pikachuâ€|" I whispered.

"Sssandâ€|" Sandshrew growled.

"Sparky! Quick Attack!"

"Pika, chu!"

Sparky dashed through Sandshrew, hurting it. That's when I realized that I hadn't told Sandshrew to do anything.

"Sandshrew! Scratch attack!"

"Sand, shrew!!"

It scratched Sparky on the head, leaving a small mark.

"Pika!" Sparky said.

"Sparky!! Swift attack!"

"Pikachu!!"

Sparky jumped over Sandshrew and released some tiny stars from the tip of its tail. They hit Sandshrew and hurt it more.

\_I need to use stronger attacks, \_ I realized.

"Fury Swipes attack!"

"Saaaand!" Shrew!"

"Sparky! Agility!!"

Sandshrew jumped at Sparky, but Sparky dashed out of the way just before Sandshrew had a chance to swipe at it. Sandshrew crashed into the ground. It picked itself up to see Sparky doing circles around it, making it impossible to land a decent attack.

\_I can't believe I'm on the receiving end of this!" \_

--

What attack could I use to even touch Sparky, let alone hurt it?

"Sparky! Quick Attack!"

Sparky broke out of its circle just long enough to dash attack Sandshrew, then it resumed its running mode.

I gritted my teeth. I needed to think of something!" fast.

"!" Ash!" someone said.

I turned around. Billie had stood up.

"You know all of Sandshrew's attacks, right?"

"Uh!" Yeah, I think so," I said, "!" Why?"

"!" You do know that Swift never misses, right?"

\_Swift never misses? No, I didn't know that.\_

--

"Um!" Of course I did! I was just!" letting Richie get a little head start. He's gonna need it, you know."

"Well, you've already given him too much of a head start!" Misty retorted, "He's way ahead of you now! Poor Sandshrew's getting all beat up!"

I turned around. She was right. Sandshrew was visibly weakening. We needed to start our comeback. Right now.

"Sandshrew!! Swift attack!!" I shouted.

"Sandshrew!"

Sandshrew fired about a dozen tiny yellow stars that made Sparky slow down in its tracks. It wasn't enough to stop it though.

"Sparky! Quick Attack!"

\_Time for our next move.\_

--

"Sandshrew! Earthquake!!!"

"Piika!!"

Pikachu dashed into Sandshrew again, but this time, Sandshrew hardly even noticed. It was too busy digging its claws into the ground.

"Saaaannndshrew!" it murmured.

Suddenly, the ground around Sandshrew started trembling, and Sparky was knocked out of rhythm.

"Piika!" it cried.

There was a low rumbling sound, and Sparky fell to the floor. But Sandshrew's attack wasn't over yet. The earth shook more and more, and every time Sparky tried to get up, it was just knocked down again, and hurt some more.

Richie stared in horror.

"Sparky! Try to counterattack!" he said.

Sparky tried, but to no avail. The match ended soon after.

"Pikachu has been eliminated! The victory goes to Ash and Sandshrew!!"

The crowd went absolutely wild. I guess they were sort of hoping for me to win. After all, the entire tournament had been put on hold because of me. It would have been really disappointing if they had gone through all that trouble just to have me lose this match.

I guess it was a good thing I didn't forfeit.

"Sandshrew!"

\_ 'Whew!' \_

I stared at Sandshrew. It had started to glow.

"Sandshrew!" I whispered.

Sandshrew grew taller, and its back split into rows of hard, spiky quills. Its front claws became huge, tearing weapons. It blinked at

me through big, black eyes.

"Sssandâ€|slash!"

"â€|â€|Sandshrewâ€|youâ€|I meanâ€|You're a Sandslash now!"

"Ssand, \_slash\_!!"

I laughed. I always felt this surge of joy when one of my PokÃ©mon evolved. It was pretty cool, reallyâ€|Except forâ€|umâ€|Charmanderâ€|

"Sandslash! Return!" I said, and Sandslash went back into its PokÃ©ball.

I grunted in surprise as Billie and Misty both tackle-hugged me at the same time. I was somehow able to break loose.

"Geez!" I said, "Are you guys nuts or something?"

"Ash, are you kidding? You just won the fifth round! There's only one more round left to becoming a PokÃ©mon Master!" Misty exclaimed.

"Yeahâ€|Wellâ€|"

I looked over my shoulder. Richie didn't look too good.

"â€|Sparkyâ€|return."

Sparky went back in its PokÃ©ball. Richie stared at his feet for a long while.

Without a word, I left my other friends and walked up to him.

"â€|Richie?"

He jumped.

"Ash!â€|Heyâ€|Congratulations, buddy."

"Thanksâ€|â€|You did a really great job."

"â€|â€|Thank you."

"â€|â€|â€|I mean that! I was getting really worried when you had Sparky running all around Sandshrewâ€|â€|That's something Iâ€|â€|" I trailed off.

\_â€|That's something I usually have Pikachu doâ€|\_

--

"â€|That's something youâ€|what?" he asked.

I blinked.



"That'sâ€¦somethingâ€¦I think is a really smart move," I finished, "â€¦If we didn't have to compete against each otherâ€¦I'm sure you could have made it into the final round." I grinned nervously.

\_Please don't take that the wrong wayâ€¦\_

He laughed, much to my relief. "You got that right, Ash! Then we'd both be PokÃ©mon Masters!"

"Hey, I didn't win the last round yet," I reminded him.

He shrugged. "Yeah, but you're going to. Iâ€¦just have a feeling."

"â€¦You never know."

We smiled. It's really good to have good friendsâ€¦I just wish I had all of them with me.

## 12. Secrets

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 12

Chapter 12

"Secrets"

\_You did it Ash. I'm so proud of you.\_

--

That's what everyone seemed to be telling me. I mean, it was nice to have all of the compliments, butâ€¦that wasn't what I wanted. I really didn't care that I had won that battle. Sure, it was a big accomplishment, butâ€¦all I wantedâ€¦was my PokÃ©mon. All I could think of was the sixâ€¦orâ€¦seven of themâ€¦trapped in their PokÃ©ballsâ€¦withâ€¦him. I couldn't let them stay like that. I had to get them backâ€¦butâ€¦I didn't know howâ€¦

"Ash! Go to sleep! It's past your bedtime, and you want to be wide awake for your battle tomorrow!"

That was my mom, of course.

"I'm going!" I called back.

I actually had been getting ready for bed. Itâ€¦just seemed weird without Pikachuâ€¦

The phone started ringing. Someone picked it up.

"â€¦Ash! It's for you!" called Professor Oak.

"Huh?" I said.

I stopped what I was doing and ran to get the phone.

"Hello?" I asked.

"Ashâ€¦Isn't there a vidphone in the building?"

That voiceâ€¦â€¦Not \_him\_!

"â€¦What do you want?" I asked.

"â€¦I want to talk to you over a video phone, at the moment."

I sighed. "Mom! Is there a video phone in here?"

"Yeah!" she answered, "There's one downstairs."

"Hold on a sec," I told him.

Since it was a portable phone, I took it with me, picked up the vidphone, then hung up on the other one.

"Hello," I said again.

The boss stared back at me with his usual unfriendly gaze.

"I saw your match today. I must say, it was quite impressive."

"Uhâ€¦Thanks."

"â€¦You do realize that you must win your next one also."

"â€¦â€¦Yeah."

"â€¦â€¦You won't win with just three PokÃ©mon."

"â€¦Huh?"

"In the final round, each trainer can use six PokÃ©mon each. Yours don't stand a chance by themselves. I'm going to send you three moreâ€¦I expectâ€¦â€¦you'll be rather pleasedâ€¦"

I blinked.

"Say what?"

He showed me the three PokÃ©balls in his hand.

"You'll be receiving these shortly."

He put them down, and a few seconds later, they were transported here one by one. I picked them up and looked at them.

"â€¦What PokÃ©mon are they?" I asked.

"â€¦Squirtle, Bulbasaur, and Pidgeotto," he answered.

I froze. Those PokÃ©monâ€¦â€¦Iâ€¦

"â€¦Areâ€¦Are theyâ€¦â€¦mine?" I stammered.

He nodded. "You've earned

them."

"Ahâ€|â€|uhâ€|â€|umâ€|â€|"

"Yes?"

"Uhhhâ€|What about Pikachu?" I asked.

"â€|You already have an electric PokÃ©mon."

That ruined my suddenly joyful mood.

"Oh."

"You had better win the next battle, Ash. All of Team Rocket is counting on you."

I gulped.

"â€|Failure is not an option."

He hung up.

I stared at the blank screen for a few seconds. "â€|Bye."

I looked down at my three 'new' PokÃ©mon.

"â€|Well you guysâ€|I'm really glad to have you backâ€|"

I turned to go back upstairs. My mom was standing on the second step. She looked a little worried.

"Ash? Who was that on the phone?" she asked.

"Huh? Ohâ€|uhâ€|no one."

I don't think she believed me.

"â€|If it was no one, then how come Professor Oak says he heard someone on the other line?"

"Uhâ€|I meanâ€|it was no one important!"

\_Bad, Ash. Really bad.\_

\_ \_

"â€|Ohâ€|â€|"

"â€|It's no big deal, Mom," I said, "Justâ€|somebody. That's all."

"â€|I seeâ€|â€|"

\_â€|Something fishy's going on hereâ€|\_

\_ \_

"â€|What's the matter?"

"Huh? Ohâ€¦I'mâ€¦I guess I'm just worried about you Ash." She sighed. "First, you disappear for two days, then, afterwards, you've been behaving really strangely. You don't have any of your old PokÃ©mon, and there's some other girl following you aroundâ€¦It just seems that a lot of weird things have been happening to youâ€¦I'm worried about you, Ashâ€¦"

\_She doesn't know I'm on Team Rocketâ€¦\_ I realized.

"Ummmâ€¦â€¦â€¦"

"â€¦â€¦Ash, is there something you're not telling me?"

\_What do I do now? Should I just say, "Yes, Mom. I'm part of the world's most wanted criminal organization now, Pikachu's being held hostage, and that girl is my partner. Any other questions?"\_

--

\_â€¦Noâ€¦That wouldn't work.\_

--

"â€¦Ash? Honey? Is everything all right?"

"Momâ€¦I'm tiredâ€¦â€¦Iâ€¦I think I'll go to sleep nowâ€¦Hehâ€¦Big day tomorrowâ€¦eh?"

She didn't look away from me, making me really nervous.

"Okay, honeyâ€¦I understandâ€¦"

I laughed nervously, then edged past her, up the stairs, and into the bedroom, where I quickly got ready for bed, andâ€¦went to bedâ€¦I didn't fall asleep though.

\* \* \*

â€¦Have you ever noticed that girls seem to have an endless supply of advice, and that it always contradicts what other girls are sayingâ€¦?

"Ash!"

I sat up. Misty closed the door behind her and glared at me.

"Ash, how could you?"

"How could I what?" I asked, honestly confused.

"I can't believe you didn't tell your mom that you're on Team Rocket!"

"But-!"

"But nothing! Doesn't she deserve to know?"

"Uhâ€¦"

"Wellâ€¦You've got some explaining to do tomorrowâ€¦I expect you to tell herâ€¦Sorry I woke you upâ€¦Bye now."

"Uhâ€¦â€¦Bye?"

â€¦Later that nightâ€¦

Billie sat up in bed. Everyone else had already fallen sound asleep. She looked over at me.

"â€¦Ash? Ash, are you awake?"

I waited a moment before answering. "â€¦Yeah, why?"

"â€¦Iâ€¦I just want to tell youâ€¦thatâ€¦you did the right thing."

I turned my head towards her.

"What are you talking about?"

"â€¦â€¦Aboutâ€¦keeping our secretâ€¦It's best if no one finds out until the boss wants them toâ€¦It's always best to do what the boss wantsâ€¦"

I stared at her through the darknessâ€¦She really needed to forget about this boss thing.

"â€¦â€¦Billie?"

"â€¦Yeah?"

"â€¦â€¦â€¦Why do you alwaysâ€¦insist on doing what the boss says?" I asked.

There was a long moment of silence. I thought for a second that she hadn't heard me.

"â€¦Iâ€¦â€¦I can't do otherwiseâ€¦" she answered quietly.

\_Huh?\_

--

"What do you mean?"

"â€¦â€¦â€¦Ashâ€¦â€¦â€¦.You knowâ€¦â€¦You of all people would understandâ€¦"

\_Huh!?!\_

--

"â€¦Why me?"

"â€¦â€¦Becauseâ€¦â€¦Because of your situation."

She looked at me, even though I was sure she had just as much trouble seeing me as I did her.

"You have to do what the boss says tooâ€¦Because if you don't, you'll

never see your Pok  mon again  "

"Uh-huh  " I said, nodding.

"    I    I listen to him    because      "

I sat up.

"You can tell me."

I thought I heard her muffle a sob.

"  Because      I have no other option      Without Team Rocket      I would just be a nobody    No home. No family      I    I was  jealous  when I saw you  with your mom      I    I'm the only one left in my family      They all    "

I stared for a moment, suddenly seeing her in a new light  regardless of the darkness in the room  

  So that's her secret    I  wonder what made her join Team Rocket?      Maybe its better not to ask  \_

--

"  I'm sorry," I said softly.

She shook her head. "Don't be  It's not your fault  You had nothing to do with it    It's  ancient history    "

I frowned. "Billie, you can't tell me whether or not to be sorry. If I want to be sorry, then I'll be sorry, and I want to be sorry. Billie, I'm sorry."

She laughed quietly. "Thanks, Ash  "

I shrugged. "Whatever  "

I think she was smiling.

"  Good night, Ash."

"Night."

### 13. Just The Beginning

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 13

Chapter 13

"Just The Beginning"

\_"And now entering the stadium is the green trainer, Ash Ketchum!!!"\_

--

I got a standing ovation before I even did anything. Did they really

know who they were cheering for?â€|I doubt it.

I nodded my acknowledgement to my opponent. Her name was Asunta. She smiled back, then took out a PokÃ©ball. She didn't look like she was going to lose easilyâ€|I wondered how well I would fareâ€|

The referee stood at the middle on the sidelines. He held up both flags.

"You will use six PokÃ©mon each. Let the battle begin!!"

He moved the flags to his side and stepped back to let us start.

"I choose you! Kangaskhan!" Asunta said. She threw out her PokÃ©ball, and a Kangaskhan came out of it.

"Thenâ€|I chooseâ€|â€|" I hesitated, not sure who to pick, "uhâ€|â€|"

"Ash! Hurry up and pick someone!" Misty yelled at me from the coaches' bench.

\_I knowâ€|I justâ€|I just wish I had a better selectionâ€|\_

--

"Pidgeotto! I choose you!"

"Pidgeooo!!!" Pidgeotto called, flapping into the air.

"It's about time," commented Asunta, "Alright, Kangaskhan! Comet Punch!"

"Pidgeotto! Quick Attack!"

"Pi-geotto!!"

Pidgeotto dove and slammed into Kangaskhan. Kangaskhan tried to counter by punching Pidgeotto, but Pidgeotto was too fast for it.

"That's it, Pidgeotto! Use Agility!"

"Geoo!!!"

Pidgeotto flew up, gaining speed as it went, then it turned and flew past Kangaskhan. With a few quick flaps, it had doubled back and flew past Kangaskhan again.

"Pidge!!" it cawed tauntingly.

"Kangaskhan! Mega Punch!"

"Kangasâ€|â€|Khan!!!!!"

Just as Pidgeotto was flying back for the rebound, Kangaskhan drew back its fist and slammed Pidgeotto right in the wing, knocking it to the ground.

"Geoâ€|ttoâ€|" it moaned.

"Pidgeotto! Get up!" I yelled anxiously.

\_Pidgeotto can't lose!\_"

"Kangaskhan! Tail Whip!"

Kangaskhan walked up to Pidgeotto, then turned and prepared to whack it with its tail.

"Pidgeo!"

Pidgeotto looked up and saw Kangaskhan's back facing it. It flapped with its wings, and rose into the air. Kangaskhan's attack swept right under it.

"Great!" I called, "Now! Whirlwind!!"

"Pidgeoooootto!!!"

Pidgeotto flapped its wings together rapidly, and a huge gust of wind started blowing Kangaskhan backwards.

"Kangaskhan!" Kangaskhan growled, trying to shield itself with its arm.

"Pidgeotto!!!!" Pidgeotto cawed, not letting up for one second.

"Kangaskhan!" Kangaskhan yelled in alarm as it lost its balance and was blown all the way back to its trainer.

"Kangaskhan!" it groaned.

"Pidgeotto! Gust!"

"Pidgeotto!!!"

Pidgeotto created a small tornado with its wings, then sent it spinning towards Kangaskhan.

"Kangaskhan! Look out!" Asunta cried.

"Kangaskhan!!!"

The wind hit Kangaskhan powerfully and Kangaskhan was knocked against the far wall.

"Oh! Kangaskhan!" Asunta cried. She turned and glared at me. She looked back at her injured Pokémon. "Kangaskhan! Return!"

One of her red bars disappeared from the scoreboard. She stood back up and took out another Pokémon, then tossed it into the ring.

"I choose Rhydon!"

"Rhhhyyy!!!" Rhydon roared.

"Uh-oh!" Ugh Pidgeotto! Double-Edge attack!"



"Rhydon! Horn Drill!"

"Pi-geooo!!!"

"Don!"

Pidgeotto gathered power as it sped towards Rhydon. Rhydon's horn started spinning around dangerously, and I realized my mistake.

"Pidgeotto! Stop!"

I guess Pidgeotto was already too far into its attack to try to slow down. It zoomed straight into Rhydon's horn, and it got tangled in it, spinning around with feathers flying everywhere. Finally, it spun off of Rhydon and landed on the ground next to it. It had lost a lot of its feathers, and blood was dripping from its body.

"Pidgeotto!" I screamed.

I ran up to it immediately and touched it lightly.

"Pidgeotto?" I asked.

It didn't answer me, but I could feel it breathing painfully.

I clenched my teeth. There was no way I was going to lose after this.

"Come here, Pidgeotto. Back in the Pok  ball. I promise I'll get you healed after the match  "

"  Pidgeotto has been eliminated! Rhydon is the winner!" shouted the referee.

I walked back to my spot. I was going to need a powerful Pok  mon to take on Rhydon  or at least one with a strong elemental advantage.

"  Squirtle! I choose you!"

"Squirtle squirtle!" Squirtle called out.

"Squirtle! Water Gun, now!"

"Squiiirrrtle!!!" Squirtle gargled, spitting out a strong jet of water at Rhydon.

"Rhydon! Fury Attack!"

Rhydon absorbed the damage from Squirtle's Water Gun and kept moving.

"Squirtle! Withdraw!" I shouted.

Rhydon jabbed at Squirtle with its horn, but it didn't hurt Squirtle at all.

"Skull Bash!"

"Squirtle!!!"

Squirtle popped its head out of its shell and knocked Rhydon back, just a little.

"Water Gun! Now!"

"Rhydon! Horn Drill!"

\_Not againâ€|\_

--

"Squiiirrrr!!!!!!"

"Don!"

Rhydon's horn started spinning around, but Squirtle blasted it with another stream of water before Rhydon could attack. Rhydon tried to ignore Squirtle's attack, but it was too weak against water.

The ref looked on.

"â€|Rhydon has been eliminated! This battle goes to Squirtle!"

"Squirtle, squirt!"

\_ 'Alright! We did it!' \_

--

"Yeahâ€|" I said, smiling just a little.

"Rhydon! Return!" Asunta said, "Venomoth! It's your turn!"

"A Venomoth?" Billie said in surprise.

I glanced back at her.

"Yeah, it's a Venomoth. So?"

"Uhâ€|â€|Nothingâ€|" she said.

\_She's hiding somethingâ€|Oh well. I'll ask her about it later.\_

--

"Squirtle! Tackle attack!"

"Ssquirt!"

"Venomoth! Tackle attack!"

"Moth!"

The two PokÃ©mon rammed into each other powerfully.

"Squirtle! Bubble!"

"Venomoth! Leech Life!"

"Squiririririrtle!!"

"Moth! Veno! Moth!"

Venomoth dodged the Bubbles and made its way towards Squirtle. Then it hooked its fangs onto the back of Squirtle's neck.

"S-quirt!" Squirtle yelped. It punched Venomoth in the head then jumped back.

"Mothhâ€|" Venomoth said disgustedly.

"Venomoth! Confusion!" shouted Asunta.

"Squirtle! Skull Bash! Now!"

"Veno moth!!"

Venomoth rose into the air, then released a blast of Confusion waves. Squirtle tried to block it and ran towards it, slowly gaining speed.

"Squirrâ€|Squirtle!!!"

Squirtle blasted Venomoth with its head and sent it spinning.

"Alright, Squirtle! Water Gun, now!"

"Venomoth! Poison Powder!"

"Squirtlllee!!" Squirtle said through a stream of water.

Before Venomoth could fly over Squirtle and release its toxins, Squirtle's Water Gun hit it and knocked it back even further.

"Great job!" I said, "Keep at it! Full power!"

"Squiiirrtllle!"

Before long, Asunta had to change PokÃ©mon.

"Venomoth! Return!" She put it away and carefully chose another one. "Tentacool! Go!"

"â€|Tentacool?" I asked.

A red light appeared from her PokÃ©ball, and a small, blue and red jellyfish PokÃ©mon came out.

"Tenta cool!" it said tauntingly.

"Noâ€|it's a water typeâ€|" I groaned. This was going to be a long battle.

"Squirt! Squirtle!"

\_ 'What're you waiting for? Let's go!' \_

- -

"Uhâ€|All right, Squirtle! Skull Bash!"

"Tle!!!!"

"Tentacool! Acid!"

As Squirtle was powering up its charge, Tentacool splashed it with its Acid attack, and Squirtle had to stop to try to wipe it off.

"Tentacool! Constrict!"

"Cool!"

Tentacool moved forward and quickly wrapped its tentacles around Squirtle's middle. It squeezed tightly for about a second, then let go and backed off.

"Tleâ€|" Squirtle groaned, still wiping its face off.

"Come on, Squirtle!" I said, "You gotta hang in there! Bite attack!"

"Squirtâ€|Squiirtle!"

"Poison Sting!" said Asunta.

Tentacool whipped its tentacle up just as Squirtle was about to attack. Squirtle ended up biting down on Tentacool's tentacle, and it released its poison right into Squirtle's mouth. After realizing what had happened, Squirtle jumped up and tried to spit it out.

"Squiiirt! Squirtle, squirt!"

\_ 'Help! It's in my mouth! Yuck!' \_

- -

It was too much for Squirtle. Squirtle finally collapsed, and the referee held up the red flag.

"Squirtle has been eliminated! The battle goes to Tentacool!"

"Tentacool!" Tentacool cheered.

"All right, Tentacool!" cried Asunta.

"â€|Squirtle! Return!" I said.

Squirtle became a beam of red light and reentered its PokÃ©ball. I tried to think of a good PokÃ©mon to use nextâ€|

"â€|Bulbasaur! I choose you!"

"Bulbasaur!"

"Bulbasaur?" Asunta said in amusement, "This should be interesting!" Tentacool! Wrap attack!"

"Bulbasaur! Vine Whip!"

Tentacool tried to get its tentacles around Bulbasaur, but Bulbasaur whacked them back with its Vines. When that was over with, Bulbasaur lashed downwards and hit Tentacool squarely on its big head with its Whips. It held them there for a few seconds, then they bounced right off.

"Huh? What the?" I said in surprise.

\_Isn't water weak against grass?\_

--

"Heh!" Don't you know that Poison is strong against Grass?" Asunta said quietly. "Tentacool! Water Gun!"

\_But Water is weak against Grass!\_

--

"Bulbasaur!" I shouted.

Tentacool shot out a blast of water that hit Bulbasaur and sent it tumbling.

"Are you okay?" I asked in alarm.

Bulbasaur climbed to its feet.

"Bulba!"

\_ 'Yeah! '\_

--

"Alright," I sighed in relief, "Good!" Now let's win! Tackle attack, now!"

"Bulbasaur!!"

Bulbasaur dashed forward and knocked Tentacool with its head.

"Razor Leaf! Now!"

"Saauurrrr!!!"

"Ten, ta cool!!" Tentacool cried in pain.

Bulbasaur released dozens of tiny, razor-sharp leaves that cut Tentacool up rather nicely.

"Tenta!" Tenta!" "cool!" " Tentacool whimpered.

"Vine Whip!"

"Saur!!"

Bulbasaur lashed at it again with its Vine Whip, and Tentacool finally couldn't take any more.

"Tenâ€|taâ€|â€|coolâ€|â€|" it moaned and fell silent.

"â€|Tentacool has been eliminated! The battle goes to Bulbasaur!"

"Bullba!!" Bulbasaur cried happily.

\_'We did it!!'\_

--

"Tentacool! Return!â€|â€|Marowak! Go!!"

"Mmâ€|Maro!"

Her Marowak came out of its PokÃ©ball and swung its club around fiercely. It looked like it was really ready to battle.

"Marowak!" it declared.

"â€|Bulbasaurâ€|I know you can beat it. Just do your bestâ€|"

"Bul, ba!" Bulbasaur grinned.

\_'I know that!'\_

--

"Alright, Bulbasaur! Razor Leaf! Now!!"

"Marowak! Growl!"

"Rrrroooâ€|â€|" Marowak Growled at Bulbasaur.

"B-ulba?" Bulbasaur said in surprise.

It shook its head then unleashed its Razor Leaf attack.

"Bulbasaurrrr!!"

"Maroâ€|" Marowak said as it just waited for Bulbasaur's attack to finish. When it was over, it still looked ready to fight.

"Marowak! Use your Bonemerang!"

"Bulbasaur! Vine Whip!"

"Sauuurr!"

"Marowak!!"

Marowak threw its bone into the air, where it knocked one of

Bulbasaur's vines aside, but the other kept going and smacked Marowak on the head. It's bone twirled and landed a few feet away from it.

"Get it, Marowak!" Asunta said.

Marowak ran and grabbed its bone up from the ground.

"Maroâ€" it said in a low voice.

"Marowak! Use your Rage attack!"

"Uh-ohâ€"Watch out Bulbasaur. Be carefulâ€"Umâ€"In the meantime, why don't we power up for a Solar Beam attack?"

"Bull!"

\_'Sounds like a plan to me!\_'

--

I grinned. "Good!"

"Bulâ€"baâ€"â€"saurâ€"!!!!"

Light energy gathered around Bulbasaur's bulb and it started glowing yellow and growing larger.

"Oh no!" Asunta said as she saw what we were doing, "Marowak! Watch out!"

Marowak didn't listen to her, though. It was too busy whacking Bulbasaur over and over again, even though it wasn't doing too much damage.

"Bulâ€"baâ€"â€" Bulbasaur growled in annoyance.

"All right, Bulbasaur! Fire it, now!!"

"SAAAAUUUUUURRRRRRR!!!!!!"

"M-arowaakkkk!!!!!"

Marowak was blown all the way to the other end of the stadium, where the light exploded and then sizzled away. Marowak was out of the battle easily.

"â€"Marowak has been eliminated! This battle goes to Bulbasaur!"

"Bulbasaur!!"

\_'All right!\_'

I grinned. We might actually win this oneâ€"

"Marowak, return!"

\_"Now Asunta is down to just one PokÃ©mon, folks! Ash still has three

more Pok  mon for her to beat, even if she does defeat his Bulbasaur!  
Is she going to make a great comeback, or is this the end for  
Asunta?"\_

\_ \_

Asunta held her Pok  ball close to her face.

"This is just the beginning," she whispered. "Ivysaur! I choose  
you!!"

"Ivysaauurr!!"

"Bulba!!?" Bulbasaur cried in surprise.

\_ 'An Ivysaur!?' \_

\_ \_

"Oh no  !" I breathed.

This wasn't good. There was no way Bulbasaur could beat an Ivysaur,  
especially after fighting two other Pok  mon.

"Bulbasaur, just do your best. I'm counting on  
you  !"

"Bulba  !"

\_ 'I know  !' \_

\_ \_

"  !  ! Bulbasaur! Tackle attack!"

"Ivysaur! Razor Leaf!"

"Bulbaa!!"

"Sauurr!!"

Bulbasaur ran forward to attack the Ivysaur, but it used its Razor  
Leaf attack, and several large, super-sharp leaves sliced through the  
air and then sliced through Bulbasaur. Bulbasaur didn't even know  
what hit it. It slowly slowed down, and finally slowed to a  
stop.

"B  !ulba  !  ! Saur."

Bulbasaur fell to the ground. The referee raised the red flag, and  
one of my counters disappeared.

"Bulbasaur has been eliminated! The battle goes to  
Ivysaur!"

\_ No  ! \_



> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 14

Chapter 14

"Final Battle"

"â€|Bulbasaur! Return!!"

\_Now I have to use one of my other onesâ€|but which one would be the bestâ€|?â€|â€|It's risky, butâ€|\_

--

"Magnetite! Go!"

"Mmmag!"

"Ivysaur! Poison Powder!"

"Iiivysaur!!"

Ivysaur let out a cloud of green powder from its back, and Magnetite became poisoned.

"Miiiteâ€|" Magnetite winced.

"Don't worry about it!" I called, "Magnetite! Thunderbolt!"

"Magne? Miiite!"

"Ivysaur! Block it with your Vine Whip!"

"Saur!"

Ivysaur used its Vines to absorb Magnetite's attack and prevent it from doing any damage.

"Now use them to attack!!" shouted Asunta.

"Ssauurrrr!!"

"Magnetite! Watch out!"

"Miite!"

Ivysaur used its Vine Whips to whack Magnetite around in the air, spinning it around, making it dizzy, and basically just giving it a pounding.

"Magnetiteâ€|" I said.

"Magneâ€|miteâ€|â€|" it groaned. It was in pretty bad shape.

"Unhhâ€|â€|Magnetite! Tackle attack!"

"Mag?â€|Magnetite!"

After regaining its balance, Magnetite zoomed towards

Ivysaur.

"Ivysaur! Finish it off! Tackle!"

"Saauurrr!!"

They both Tackled each other, but Ivysaur proved to be the stronger of the two, and it Tackled Magnemite onto the ground, defeating it.

"â€|Magnemite has been eliminated! Ivysaur is the winner!"

"Mâ€|miteâ€|" gasped Magnemite.

"Magnemite! Return!" I took out another PokÃ©ball, "This one should be able to winâ€|Sandslash! Go!"

"Ssslassh!!"

"Sandslash! Slash attack!"

"Ssandslash!"

Sandslash jumped forward and Slashed Ivysaur with its huge, sharp claws. A streak of red appeared where it had cut, and Ivysaur looked more than a little dazed.

"â€|Ivysaur! Leech Seed!" Asunta shouted.

"Ivyâ€|Saur!"

A seed emerged from its bud and jumped onto Sandslash. Lots of vines grew from the seed and covered Sandslash, making it unable to move.

"Ssandslashhâ€|" it said.

Ivysaur was looking better already.

"Ivysaur! Tackle attack!"

"Saur!"

Ivysaur bashed into Sandslash and it rolled back towards me. I could see we weren't going to win this way."

"â€|Sandslash, return!"

"Whoa! It looks like both of the trainers are now down to just one PokÃ©mon each! Asunta's Ivysaur is a real fighter, and it's giving Ash's PokÃ©mon an incredibly hard time! Let's see who can pull this one off!"\_

\_ \_

"â€|Taper! I choose you!"

\_â€|You're my last choiceâ€|\_

--

"Drowzee!" Drowzee said calmly. It blinked at Ivysaur.  
"Drowzee."

An Ivysaur! This should be easy, Ash.

"I sure hope so!"

--

"Taper! Disable attack!"

"Drowzee?"

'Are you sure about that?'

--

"It looks like Ash is having trouble controlling his Drowzee! This could give Asunta a major advantage!"

--

"Ivysaur! Sleep Powder!"

I gritted my teeth.

"Taper, I really don't care what you do, as long as you win!"

Taper turned and stared at me with its small eyes.

"I'll do as you say!"

Just before Ivysaur's Sleep Powder was about to hit it, Taper raised its arms and sent a blue blast at it and knocked it away. Then it stared at Ivysaur. It moved its arms ever so slightly, and with a flash, Ivysaur became paralyzed.

"I'vey!" it strained, trying to move.

"I know just how you feel, Ivysaur! but don't think that means I'm going to lose to you!"

--

Heh!"

"Taper, just hurry up," I said in annoyance.

"Drowzee!" Zeeee!!"

'Then I'll use Confusion!'

--

Its eyes glowed blue and a blue haze surrounded Ivysaur as well. Suddenly, Ivysaur rose into the air and was tossed back towards

Asunta, then just as quickly, it came back towards Drowzee.

"Drowzee!"

--

Using its mind, Taper sent Ivysaur flying back towards Asunta again. When it was all the way at the other end, Taper let it hover there for a moment, then raised it into the air and slammed down into the ground as hard as it could. After a moment's pause, Taper released its hold on Ivysaur, and Ivysaur fell wilted limply.

The referee dashed over to see how Ivysaur was doing. Finally, he raised the green flag.

"Ivysaur has been eliminated! The battle goes to Ash!"

The crowd went crazy. I mean really crazy. They were jumping out of their seats from their sudden insanity. They were all cheering for me!

"You did it, Ash!"

"Great job!"

"I knew you could do it."

I just kind of smiled.

"Thanks!" Taper! Return!"

"Drowzee!"

\_'Sure. My job's done!\_'

--

Taper went back inside its Pokéball, and I turned to face my friends.

"That was pretty cool," Billie told me, "Now I know a Pokémon Master!"

"Uh!" I said nervously.

I didn't feel like a Pokémon Master. All this time, I thought that it would be a whole lot different but I felt just the same.

Just then, the door that led back to the locker room burst open to reveal Jessie, James, and Meowth.

"Ash! The boss is on the phone!" Jessie announced.

"And he wants to talk to you right now!" James said.

"Wh-what are you guys doing here!?" I asked, "How did you get past the police? And why aren't you keeping your distance? Isn't that what you're supposed to be doing? I don't see you wearing any disguises."

"It's not your place to question your superiors," Jessie replied haughtily, "and besides, you really don't want to keep the boss waiting, do you? This isn't a toll-free number, you know."

"All right I'll go talk to him" I grumbled.

I went past them, found the phone and picked it up. The boss was actually smiling for once. It still wasn't a nice smile though.

"Congratulations, Ash," he said, "I knew I could count on you to carry out your duty."

\_What is he talking about now?\_

--

I glanced up because someone had just entered the room. It was Jessie, James, and Meowth. I looked back at the screen.

"Why do you look so down, Ash? You should be happy that you won."

"I know that. But how can I be happy when I just won because you told me to?"

"Is that the real reason why you won? I must say, if it is, then I'm very glad, but I do doubt it. Ash, I want you to return to Viridian right away. I need to inform you of your next mission"

I blinked.

--

\_Next mission?\_

--

"But don't I have to fight the Elite Four, now?"

"Yes, yes, yes," he said dismissively, "but you're allowed to do that on your own time, right?"

"Right"

"So come to Viridian and I'll see what else I can do for you"

"You'd better give me back my Pok mon," I said with dead seriousness.

He smiled slightly. "You'll just have to come, Ash."

I suddenly thought of something.

"What about that awards ceremony later on? You don't want me to miss it, do you? I've already been late to enough things as it is"

He sighed.

"Fine then. Go to the awards ceremony, but don't tell them that you're in Team Rocket yet. We'll save that for when you defeat the Elite Four."

\_He sounds as if he knows for sure that I'll winâ€|I wonder what he's planning now?\_

--

"Okay," I said.

It was best to just do what he saidâ€|Just like Billie had been telling me all along.

"Good."

The screen blanked out before I got a chance to say goodbye.

\_That guy's kinda weirdâ€|\_

--

"All right. You're going to the awards ceremony!" James said suddenly.

"Hurry up, Ash! You have to get ready! Tonight's a big night!" Jessie said.

"Yeah! Ya wanna look yer best!" Meowth laughed.

"But-!" I started to say, but they were already pushing me out the door and saying really weird things while they were at it.

> <!--[if !supportLineBreakNewLine]--><br>

I glanced backwards for help, but Misty, Brock, and Billie couldn't do anything about it.

Misty suddenly raised her hand and waved vigorously.

"Bye Ash!" she called, "Good luck!!"

## 15. One Of Their Own

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 15

### Chapter 15

"One Of Their Own"

I stood in the spotlight with three other trainers as Mr. Goodshow read off the names of the top trainers in this years PokÃ©mon League. Normally, I would've liked all the attention, but right then, I just wanted to go home and be aloneâ€|No more PokÃ©mon Leagueâ€|No more trainingâ€|No more Team Rocketâ€|No more smilesâ€|No moreâ€|None ofâ€|thisâ€|

"Ash Ketchum!"

I squinted as the light on me got brighter. I waved half-heartedly at the cheering crowds.

\_Just let me go homeâ€|with Pikachuâ€|\_

--

Mr. Goodshow started giving a short description of my battles, just like he did for the other winners, but then he did something a lot different. Mr. Goodshow walked up to me and put the microphone in front of me.

"Ash," he said, "When you disappeared, we were all worried sick. Could you put our minds at rest and tell the world what happened to you for those two long days?"

I completely blanked out. I couldn't tell them the truth, but I couldn't lie about itâ€|

\_I need an out, I need an outâ€|\_

--

I scanned the crowd for my friends. I found them pretty quickly. They didn't look too happy about this either. Billie stood up and tried to say something, but Misty and Brock pulled her down.

\_I wonder what she was going to doâ€|?\_

--

"â€|Well Ash?" asked Mr. Goodshow.

I yelped. I guess I was more nervous than I thought.

"Uhhmmâ€|" I started, "Wellâ€|uhhâ€|â€|It's uhhâ€|â€|It'sâ€|kindaâ€|â€|ummâ€|â€|"

\_Think, Ash!!\_

--

"â€|Yes?"

"Uhhmâ€|"

I felt tiny beads of sweat running down my neck.

\_â€|Maybe tell him the truth? Noâ€|Maybeâ€|â€|â€|uhâ€|Make up some excuseâ€|â€|orâ€|lieâ€|orâ€|â€|orâ€|â€|Tell the truth?â€|Wait! That's it!\_

--

"Uh, I, uhâ€|I think you'll have to wait on thatâ€|" I said, my voice quavering.

He blinked in surprise.

"Huh?"

"Well, uhâ€¦You seeâ€¦Iâ€¦umâ€¦â€¦Now isn't really a good time!  
Uhâ€¦Ehâ€¦Maybeâ€¦â€¦Maybe you'll find outâ€¦umâ€¦â€¦â€¦I know!  
You'll find outâ€¦after I beat the Elite Four! Heh  
hehâ€¦"

\_Pleaseworkpleaseworkpleaseworkâ€¦!\_

--

He gave me a kind of confused look, then turned back to the audience.  
I sighed audibly. That was a great relief.

"Well, folks! I guess we'll just have to wait! Now would all the  
participants please line up to receive your commemorative badges!"

The four of us had already received ours, and we were supposed to  
just stand there and watch, but I didn't feel too good. After making  
sure I wasn't the main attraction anymore, I told one of the official  
guys that I needed to sit down, and he pointed me to the  
exit.

"Thanksâ€¦"

I pushed open the door and let myself into the cool hallway. There  
was a slight breeze. That was a great relief from the heat of that  
platform out in the stadium. I walked slowly down the hall. I just  
needed to get away from it all. I didn't want anyone to come and find  
me, because then it would be all that pressure again. I needed a  
place to sit down.

I made my way to the lobby. It was empty, because everybody else was  
watching the ceremony. I sat down on a bench and  
sighed.

\_Pikachuâ€¦where are you, buddy? Why can't you be here with  
me?â€¦Everything would be all right if I knew you were okayâ€¦\_

--

I covered my face with my hands. I felt like crying, but no tears  
would come out.

\_This is all Team Rocket's fault. I wishâ€¦I wish I could pay them  
back somehow for everything they've done to usâ€¦butâ€¦\_

--

\_â€¦but that'll just make it worseâ€¦\_

--

\_â€¦Life is so unfairâ€¦\_

--

I didn't move from that spot for I don't know how long. I couldn't  
find the will to get up or go anywhere. I just wanted Pikachu



backâ€|

"â€|There you are!"

I looked up.

\_Not them againâ€|\_

--

"Listen up, twerp," Jessie said spitefully, "We have to get to Viridian City, so stop moping, and let's get moving!"

"This is no time to be feeling sorry for yourself," James added, "Millions would do anything to be in your shoes."

"I'd be more than willing to trade places with them," I said quietly.

"â€|What was that?" Jessie asked.

"â€|Nothing," I sighed.

"Come on, kid!" Meowth said, "We don't have all day!â€|Er, I mean, night!"

"â€|Ash!"

I turned my head. Mom, Misty, Brock, Richie, Billie, Professor Oakâ€|What were they doing here?

They ran until they were all in the lobby.

"Ash, what happened? Why'd you leave the stadium?" Misty asked.

\_What can I tell her? That I don't really care about the PokÃ©mon League anymore?â€|She'd never believe meâ€|\_

--

"Ash, are you all right?" Richie asked.

"Ash, you're missing all the excitement," my mom added.

I didn't look at their faces. I didn't care about celebrations. I wanted my PokÃ©mon.

"â€|What's the matter, Ash?" Billie said.

I stood up, slowly.

"â€|Nothing's wrong," I lied, "Iâ€|I have to get goingâ€|"

I looked up. Suddenly, I regretted saying those words. I suddenly wanted to stay. The Indigo League only has a tournament once a year. To miss the celebration now, when I was so closeâ€|

I shook those thoughts out of my mind. My PokÃ©mon were waiting for me. I couldn't let them down.

"Soâ€¦Iâ€¦I guess I'llâ€¦be leaving nowâ€¦"

"It's about time," James said impatiently.

"Ash, you're not going by yourself!" Misty said.

"Yeahâ€¦I'm coming too," Billie said.

\_Well, that was a given.\_

--

"Same here," said Misty.

"Me too," Brock nodded.

"I'll come too," Richie said.

"Well, there's no reason for me to stay here if you're not here, Ash," Mom said slowly.

"That goes for me, too," said Prof. Oak.

"Ehâ€¦Okay," I shrugged.

There was no point in trying to convince them otherwise. They would just come anyway.

"Soâ€¦Who's riding in our truck?" James asked.

\* \* \*

"Theyâ€¦can't exactly come with usâ€¦can they?" I said to Billie after we had arrived in Viridian.

"No. They can't," she replied.

I sighed. "Sorry guys. Team Rocket only, from here on," I said bitterly.

I didn't like the fact that that included me.

We separated. Mom and Professor Oak had already gone ahead to Pallet Town. The rest of the non-Rockets headed to the PokÃ©mon Center, and then we went to the Team Rocket HQ.

"Ash, you'd better see the boss right awayâ€¦" Jessie said.

I was a little surprised that she actually called me by my name, but I just gave her a strange look instead of actually saying anything.

"â€¦Well, we'll see you twerps laterâ€¦"

They turned down a side hall and left Billie and me alone.

It was quiet as we walked down the hall. I guess neither of us had the guts to say anythingâ€¦

Before I knew it, we had reached the boss's office door. We stopped in front of it and just stood there.

"â€|Do you think he wants to see just youâ€|or me too?"

"I dunno," I replied.

She shifted uneasily. "Wellâ€|I guess we'll just have to find out, huh?"

"Guess so."

Since she wasn't doing anything, I knocked on the door.

"â€|Who is it?"

"Uhâ€|" I glanced at Billie.

"Billie and Ash," she sighed.

"Ash?â€|â€|Could I see you privately, please?"

"Sureâ€|"

Billie stepped back shyly. "It's all yoursâ€|Good luck, Ash."

"Yeah. I'm gonna need it."

She turned and shuffled quickly down the hall. I opened the door and let myself in. As expected, there was the bossâ€|waiting for me.

"â€|You did good, Ash," he said.

\_Good? I did 'good'?! That's the best compliment he could come up with!?\_

--

"Uhâ€|Thanksâ€|"

"â€|â€|I suppose you want your PokÃ©mon nowâ€|" he said slowly.

\_Do I ever!\_

--

"Yeahâ€|"

He glared at me with his normal expression of contempt, but I saw the corner of his mouth lift, just a littleâ€|It was disturbing.

"You can have them."

\_What?\_

--

I stared at him.

"â€|Really?" I managed to say.

He nodded slightly.

"Yes. You've earned them, Ash. You may take them backâ€|â€|Wellâ€|all except oneâ€|but I'm sure you wouldn't want it anywayâ€|"

"Which one!?" I demanded, "Not Pikachu. I have to have Pikachu back!"

He looked disgusted. "You can have that furball. I'm talking about Charizard."

\_â€|Charizard?\_

--

"Charizard is a PokÃ©mon with great potential. I don't see why you didn't train it properlyâ€|I guess you just couldn't handle itâ€|"

\_That's easy for you to sayâ€|\_

--

"Well, it doesn't matter now. I'll train Charizard from now on, and you'll be free to use whichever PokÃ©mon you chooseâ€|Of courseâ€|the ones that you're not using will have to stay with meâ€|I would hate to see you transfer them back to that muddle-head, Professor Oakâ€|"

"Professor Oak is a muddle-head?"

I didn't even know what a muddle-head was.

He seemed frustrated. "That's not important. I want you to choose the six PokÃ©mon that you want to train, and get started. It won't be easy to take on the Elite Four, and I want you to be preparedâ€|I take it you'll want Pikachuâ€|What else?"

I suddenly remembered the sixth PokÃ©ball that Taper had tried to give me.

"What elseâ€|do you have?"

"You should knowâ€|Kingler and Muk."

"Kingler!? How did you get Kingler? I didn't have it with me when I came here!"

"â€|I have my waysâ€|"

\_Ohâ€|He must have had one of hisâ€|team membersâ€|steal itâ€|\_

--

"Wellâ€|I know I want Pikachu!"

\_â€|but I don't want to leave anyone else with him eitherâ€|\_

--

"â€|Is that all?"

\_Who else should I takeâ€|? But for every one that I take, I'll have to give him oneâ€|I don't want to do thatâ€|\_

--

"â€|How about if I get the Sandslash, and you'll get the Pikachu?" he suggested.

\_Give him Sandslashâ€|? But then I'll get Pikachuâ€|\_

--

"Okayâ€|â€|What about Pidgeotto?"

"What about Pidgeotto?" he asked.

"Pidgeotto got hurt pretty bad in the last battleâ€|It needs to get healed as soon as possibleâ€|"

"I'll take it."

"â€|Will you be able to heal it?"

"Yes."

"Okayâ€|"

"â€|So who else do you want in return?"

"Umâ€|"

\_Kingler, Muk, or Sandslashâ€|\_

--

"I know. Instead of trading your Sandslash for Pikachu, why don't you go ahead and keep your Sandslash and just trade Pidgeotto instead?"

"That would workâ€|"

"â€|Are we done here?"

"â€|â€|Yeahâ€|"

\_Sorry, everyoneâ€|\_

--

He stood up and walked around his desk. He held out his hand.

"Give me Pidgeotto, and I'll give you Pikachu."

"Okayâ€|"

I took Pidgeotto's PokÃ©ball from my belt and gave it to

him.

"â€|You promise you'll take care of it?"

I knew I couldn't take his word, but I still needed some sort of comfort that Pidgeotto would be all right.

"â€|Trust me, boy. I would never hurt one of my ownâ€|"

He turned around and entered the locked off room full of PokÃ©balls. Pikachu, Kingler, and Muk were in there somewhere, and I was getting one of them backâ€|

He returned in a few minutes and handed me a PokÃ©ball with a small lightning bolt on it.

"Here's your Pikachuâ€|I want you back here at this time tomorrow to check on your progressâ€|Don't be late."

I gulped. "I won'tâ€|"

## 16. Reunited

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 16

### Chapter 16

"Reunited"

"Pikachuâ€|Come on out."

Pikachu came out of the PokÃ©ballâ€|It sure was weirdâ€|

"Pikaâ€|Pikachu?"

\_'What a reliefâ€|What's going on? '\_

--

"Pikachu! You're okay!"

Pikachu turned around. It's eyes light up when it saw me.

"Pikapi!!"

\_'Ash! You're back! '\_

--

It jumped into my arms and I squeezed it tight.

"I missed you so muchâ€|" I whispered.

I finally felt the tears escape from my eyesâ€|It felt goodâ€|

"Pikachuâ€|"

\_ 'I missed you tooâ€|'\_

- -

"I was afraidâ€|" I sniffed, "I was afraid I wouldn't see you again, Pikachuâ€|"

"Piikaâ€|Pikachu."

\_ 'Me tooâ€|I was worried about you.'\_

- -

I laughed softly, causing more tears to leak out.

"You were worried about meâ€|? Pikachuâ€|I was just fineâ€|â€|I was just worriedâ€|so muchâ€|Iâ€|â€|"

"Pikachuâ€|Pikaâ€|"

\_ 'Don't worry anymoreâ€|It's overâ€|'\_

- -

"â€|I hope you're rightâ€|"

Pikachu was becoming nothing but a watery yellow blurâ€|

"â€|I'm so glad you're okayâ€|"

"Pikaâ€|"

\_ 'Me tooâ€|'\_

- -

Hugging Pikachu close to me, I stood up and tried to wipe away my tears.

"â€|What should we do now?" I asked softly.

"Pikachu!"

\_ 'We try to get the rest of us back!'\_

- -

I smiled.

"Sounds like a plan to meâ€|and I \_know\_ we'll be able to pull it offâ€|as long as we stick together."

"\_Pi\_ ka!"

\_ 'Yeah!'\_

- -

\* \* \*

Now that I had Pikachu back, I finally felt whole again. Having Pikachu perched on my shoulder and clinging to my jacket felt like the best thing in the world. I couldn't care if the world came to an end, as long as Pikachu and I stayed together forever.

We went to our room. Billie was already in there. She jumped up when she saw us.

"Oh, wow! Ash! Is that your Pikachu?" she exclaimed.

"Uh-huh," I said.

"Pi \_ka\_ chu!"

\_ 'Yep!' \_

--

"Ohhâ€|It's so cute!â€|Can I pet it?"

"Wellâ€|Just be careful, okay?"

"Don't worry. I will."

"Pika!"

\_ 'Okay!' \_

--

Pikachu hopped down into my arms and Billie lightly rubbed it on the head.

"Piikaâ€|"

\_ 'Yeah, that's niceâ€|' \_

--

"Hehâ€|I think Pikachu likes you, Billie," I said, grinning.

"â€|You think so?"

"Uh-huh."

"Ohhâ€|Awâ€|" She smiled. "That's really nice of itâ€|"

"Pikachu!"

\_ 'Well, I'm nice!' \_

--

I laughed. That's when I noticed the time.

"Gee, we'd better get to sleep, huh, guys?" I said.

"Huh?" Billie asked, "â€|Ohâ€|Yeahâ€|Guess you're rightâ€|Well, see



you tomorrow."

"Good night."

"Pikachuâ€|"

\_'Good nightâ€|'\_

--

\* \* \*

I slept very lightly. I had too many things running through my mind to really get a good night's rest. Pikachu and Billie, on the other hand, were sleeping very well.

\_Pikachu knows I want the rest of my PokÃ©mon backâ€|I know Pikachu wants them back tooâ€|â€|but I can't break in again like I did beforeâ€|It's too dangerousâ€|â€|\_

--

I sighed. Things weren't looking so good.

\_Maybeâ€|I could try againâ€|but this time I'll be more carefulâ€|I know that the PokÃ©mon are going to come out and attack meâ€|Maybe if I have my PokÃ©mon ready to fight backâ€|? Or what if I just grabbed them and ran out as fast as I couldâ€|? I wasted a lot of time last timeâ€|I won't do that againâ€|â€|\_

--

\_â€|Orâ€|I couldâ€|justâ€|â€|wait until laterâ€|â€|I can take them out whenever I want toâ€|â€|Maybeâ€|if I left some with Misty and the othersâ€|then took out the restâ€|â€|Then I'd have them allâ€|â€|but we're only allowed to carry six at a timeâ€|\_

--

\_â€|But Team Rocket doesn't play by the rules.\_

--

\_â€|But I don't want to be in Team Rocketâ€|I just want out of this messâ€|â€|\_

--

\_â€|â€|Maybe there's another way â€|\_

--

\* \* \*

"â€|Ash! Ash, wake up!"

"Pikapi!"

\_'Wake up, Ash!'\_

--

I blinked open my eyes.

"Huh?" I said sleepily.

"You were sleeping like a log," Billie huffed, "What time did you fall asleep?"

"Umâ€|"

"Well, enough about that. We have work to do."

I sat up.

"What kind of work?" I asked.

"Oh, you knowâ€|The usual."

I shook my head. "No, I don't know. What is the usual?"

"Going aroundâ€|finding trainers to steal fromâ€|â€|The usual."

"Well, I don't wanna do that!"

"Well, you ain't got a choice! You're in Team Rocket; you do what Team Rocket does! It's plain and simple. Deal with it."

"Man, what side of the bed did you wake up on this morning?" I grumbled.

"What!?"

"Nothingâ€|"

"â€|Get your uniform onâ€|and yourâ€|disguise. And your name is Tom, okay?"

"Whatever."

"Don't 'whatever' meâ€|Tom."

"â€|Pika?"

\_'â€|Huh? '\_

--

"â€|Don't worry about it, Pikachu."

"â€|Pikaâ€|"

\_'â€|Okayâ€| '\_

--

\* \* \*

"I hate this uniform," I said absently.

"Pikachu."

\_ 'Me too.' \_

- -

"Don't know why I have to wear it. Billie can't make me do anythingâ€| 'Rocket-y'â€| Right, Pikachu?"

"\_Pi\_ ka!"

\_ 'Right!' \_

- -

I grinned.

"See? I knew I was right."

"Pika, pikachu!"

\_ 'Of course!' \_

- -

\* \* \*

\_ I hope Billie's in a better mood nowâ€| \_

- -

"Uhâ€| Hi, Billie!â€| How's it goin'?"

"Fineâ€| why?"

"Ohâ€| I dunnoâ€| Just wonderin', I guess."

She gave me a quizzical look.

"Okay thenâ€| Are we leaving or what?"

\_ Or what. \_

- -

"Sure. Let's go."

"Pika!"

\_ 'Yeah!' \_

- -

We left the HQ. Pikachu was riding on my shoulder, like usual. That's when I realized something.

"Uhâ€| Billie?"

"Yeah?"

"How many other trainers let their Pikachu ride on them?"

"Pika?"

\_'Why does it matter? '\_

--

"I dunnoâ€|" Billie said thoughtfully, "Not too many, I guess."

"Then isn't it kinda silly for me to wear this disguise if it's already pretty obvious who I am?"

"Wellâ€|"It can't hurtâ€|"

"Oh, come on, Billie! How stupid do you think these people are?"

"Well, if they're anything like youâ€|"

"\_What\_!!?"

"I'm kidding. I'm just kidding, Ash. Don't take it so personallyâ€|"

"But you \_said\_-!"

"Ash. Chill."

I tried my best to 'chill'.

"â€|"Fine then," she said, "If you want everyone to know that you're in Team Rocket, go ahead. Take off the wig. It won't bother me."

"Piika?"

\_'Ash, are you sure about this? '\_

--

"Yeah, I'm sure."

I tore it off gratefully and tossed it.

"Come on. Let's go to the PokÃ©mon Center," I said.

"But that place is public!" Billie exclaimed.

"So? That's where Misty and Brock and Richie are. I want to at least say hi."

"Butâ€|"

"What? Are you afraid Nurse Joy is going to arrest you or something? Come on."

"Wellâ€¦if we're going to go someplace publicâ€¦then we might as well change, eh?"

I groaned. "Then what was the point of putting on our uniforms in the first place!?"

"I thought we were going to go andâ€¦Oh, nevermind. I guess I should have known betterâ€¦"

## 17. Taper's Decision

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 17

### Chapter 17

#### "Taper's Decision"

We went into the PokÃ©mon Center and found Misty, Brock and Richie pretty quicklyâ€¦I guess no one thought it was strange that I hadn't been staying with them in the first placeâ€¦

I knocked on their door.

"I'll get it," I heard Brock say.

He opened the door, and I think his eyes widened a little when he saw us. I'm not sure though. It was hard to tell.

"A-Ash! Youâ€¦You got Pikachu back!" he said in surprise.

"That's rightâ€¦Soâ€¦are you gonna let us in, or what?"

"O-oh! Sure! Come on in!"

He let us in. They looked like they had just gotten up recently.

\_They don't have an annoying alarm clock by the name of Billie,\_ I thought to myself.

"Ash! Pikachu! You guys are okay!" Misty exclaimed.

"Yeah," I said.

\_This is getting oldâ€¦\_

--

"What's wrong you guys? No one wants to say hi to me?" Billie asked.

"Hi, Billie," Brock said.

--

"Hey, all," Richie said.

"So, Ashâ€¦Now that that's taken care ofâ€¦When are you gonna challenge the Elite Four?" Misty said, "You can do that now,

y'know."

"Uhhâ€|"

"He'll challenge them on his own good time," Billie interrupted, "â€|Well, at least on the boss's good timeâ€|" She shrugged. "What's the difference, eh?"

\_Trust me, there's a \_huge\_ difference.\_

--

I gave her a warning look and she got quiet.

"Ohâ€|well, I hope you do it soon, 'cause I'm not waiting around for too long," Misty said, "You've already come this far in a year. You're not going to wait another one to fight them, are you?"

"No way!" I countered, "I'll fight themâ€|when I'm readyâ€|and not a moment beforeâ€|or after."

"So you sayâ€|" Brock said, "â€|but are you sure you can keep to that?"

"Of course I can!" I said, "I can do anything I put my mind to!"

\_Speaking of whichâ€|I hope I can get outta Team Rocketâ€|\_

--

Misty sighed. "In your dreams, maybe."

Pikachu must have sense my building frustration.

"Pikachu. Pikapika. Pikachu."

\_It's all right, Ash. Don't worry about what they say. They don't know what you're going through.\_

--

I sighed. "Thanks, Pikachu."

That made me feel better already.

"Huh? What'd it say?" Billie asked.

"Umâ€|nothing," I said.

"Wellâ€|We're not gonna just stay here in Viridian, are we? The Elite Four are all at Indigo Plateau. If you're ever going to challenge them, we have to head back over there."

\_But I have to meet the boss later todayâ€|\_

--

"â€|Iâ€|think we'll justâ€|â€|stay hereâ€|for nowâ€|" I mumbled.

"Is something wrong, Ash?" asked Richie.

I jerked my head up. "Wrong?! Uhh...No...Nothing's wrong!"

Yet another bad cover-up by the great Ash Ketchum!

--

Richie thought of another thing. "Hey Ash. Since it looks like you're getting your Pokémon back, do you think I can have Taper now?"

Have Taper? But!

--

"I...don't know!"

I blinked. Taper sure had grown on me!

"Maybe...we should let Taper decide!"

"Ash...you can't just give Taper back. Any Pokémon that you catch are the property of Team Rocket," Billie said.

"I didn't catch it...now did I?"

"Mm..." Billie mumbled.

I took out the only Pokéball on my belt that had a star on it.

"Taper! Come out!"

Taper emerged from its Pokéball.

"Drowzee, drow!"

'What do you want now? You're not in a battle!'

--

"Taper...Richie wants to know if you want to go back with him now!" I said quietly.

"Drow!?"

'With him!?'\_

--

"Well...He is the one who caught you, you know!"

But!

Taper blinked upwards at Richie, who grinned nervously. He kneeled down in front of Taper.

"Hi, Taper," he said softly, "How're ya doing? Is Ash taking good

care of you?"

Ash is taking really good care of meâ€¦ Taper blinked.

I don't know if Richie heard it or not. He didn't react, at least.

"If you want to come back nowâ€¦you canâ€¦I'd be glad to have you backâ€¦"

You never took care of me in the first place. You just caught me.

I was beginning to think that Richie couldn't hear Taper.

"Uhâ€¦Taper? Umâ€¦just do whatever you think isâ€¦bestâ€¦" I said quietly.

\_You can go back with Richie if you want toâ€¦\_

--

Taper looked over its shoulder.

\_Oh yeahâ€¦You can read minds, can't you?\_

--

Taper nodded.

"Drowzeeâ€¦Drrowzeeâ€¦Zee. Drow."

\_I don't want to go with himâ€¦I don't have any attachments to himâ€¦He just caught me. That's all.'\_

--

I nodded. "Then tell him."

"Pika?"

\_You can understand that?'\_

--

"Sure I can, Pikachuâ€¦"

\_It's my PokÃ©mon, after allâ€¦\_

--

Taper turned around and waddled back to me.

"Drowzee."

\_I've made up my mind.'\_

--

Richie stood up.



"â€|What's it decided?"

"Drowâ€| "

\_ 'Go ahead. Tell him, Ash.' \_

--

"Uhâ€|Taper's decidedâ€|to stay with meâ€| "

\_ I hope he doesn't mindâ€| \_

--

He won't.

I frowned.

"How do you know?" I whispered.

Taper stared up at me with its sleepy-looking eyes.

You don't trust a psychic PokÃ©mon?

"â€|Guess you have a point."

Richie smiled sadly. "That's what I thoughtâ€|You two have grown close, haven't you?â€|It takes a lot to be able to train a psychic PokÃ©monâ€|I probably couldn't have done it."

"Well...I didn't think \_I\_ could either," I laughed.

Billie groaned. "Ash, you were as confident as ever when you used it to try to capture Magnemite."

I laughed nervously in remembrance.

"Ohâ€|yeahâ€| "

Taper smiled. Sorry about that, Ash.

"Don't worry. It's in the pastâ€| "

Misty watched us in scrutiny. "I still don't get it. How do you have a one-sided conversation with a PokÃ©mon? Don't they usually talk back?"

I glanced up, realizing what I must look like when I talk to Taper.

"Uhhâ€| "

"Ddrowzee?"

\_ 'That's gonna be hard to cover upâ€|' \_

--

"Pikapikachu."

\_ 'Yeah. Even I don't get it.' \_

- -

I laughed loudly. "Hey you guys! Don't we have training to do?!" I held out Taper's Pok  ball. "Taper! Return!"

I headed for the door. "Let's go, you guys!"

"Bad cover-up, Ash. Really bad," I heard Misty say to herself.

\_ Well   at least she's not lying. \_

## 18. Ash's Decision

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 18

### Chapter 18

#### "Ash's Decision"

I flopped down on the bed and sighed loudly. It had been a long day, and I hadn't even met with Boss Rocket yet.

"Pikachu  "

\_ 'You look tired  ' \_

- -

"Yeah, no kidding."

Billie opened the door and let herself in.

"Ash, what are you doing? This is no time for a nap!"

"What's wrong with naps?" I asked absently.

"You can't have any if the boss is expecting to meet with you soon."

"That's doesn't matter   Can't I just sneak in one little nap? Pleeze?"

She sighed in exasperation.

"Don't try that little kid act on me, Ash Ketchum. It's not gonna work."

"Oh, come on   One nap won't hurt   Pwetty pweeze wid soogar on tohhp?"

"Why did I have to open my big mouth  ?" she sighed, "   Fine, Ash! Go ahead! But if the boss gets on your case, it wasn't my fault."

"Tanks," I said, grinning.

"â€|Look, I'm gonna go walk around, okay? If you ever wake upâ€|you'll probably be able to find me. This isn't that big of a placeâ€|"

After a wistful glance back, she left the room and closed the door behind her.

I sighed and laid my head down.

"â€|She's finally goneâ€|â€|"

"Piika?"

\_'Why'd you want her to leave?'\_

--

"I don't knowâ€|â€|Everything seemsâ€|so confusingâ€|doesn't it, Pikachu?"

"Pika?"

\_'It does?'\_

--

"Wellâ€|yeah. I meanâ€|I never wanted to be in Team Rocket, butâ€|here I amâ€|I didn't even want to beat Richie, butâ€|I made it past the finalsâ€|I meanâ€|Nothing seems to be going the way I want it to."

"Piika, kachu."

\_'Well, you can't control everything that happens to you.'\_

--

"I know that, Pikachuâ€|â€|but I still wish I could."

"â€|Pi?"

\_'â€|What are you going to do?'\_

--

I didn't answer.

\_'I want to just get awayâ€|I keep getting shoved aroundâ€|especially by the bossâ€|I need to quit Team Rocketâ€|but I can't do that, because he still has the rest of my PokÃ©monâ€|and Pidgeottoâ€|'\_

--

\_'â€|I hope Pidgeotto is okay. He did say he would take care of itâ€|and that he would never hurt one of his ownâ€|Mmâ€|One of his own? What did he mean by that?\_'

--

"Pikachu, pika? Kachuâ€|"

\_'Are you okay, Ash? You're awfully quietâ€|' \_

--

\_Am I okay?â€|I'm not really sureâ€|\_

--

"â€|â€|Pikaâ€|chu?"

\_'â€|â€|Ash?â€|Did you hear me?' \_

--

"â€|Yeah, I heard you, Pikachuâ€|"

"Pikachu!"

\_'Then why didn't you answer me!?' \_

--

"â€|â€|I don't knowâ€|"

"Pikachu, pikaâ€|"

\_'Ash, you're starting to worry meâ€|' \_

--

"â€|Sorry."

\_â€|I need a way to get away from Team Rocket, but still make sure my PokÃ©mon are okayâ€|â€|I can't carry all of them with me, soâ€|â€|\_

--

I suddenly realized what I had been doing wrong all this timeâ€|and what I thought of next scared me.

\_â€|what if I just left all of my PokÃ©mon?\_

--

\_â€|No! Are you crazy? That's crazy!\_

--

\_â€|â€|But is it really?\_

--

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that it would workâ€|

I sat up. I took off my jacket and laid in on the bed. Then I stood

up and went over to the safe that had all of my things in it. I opened it up and took out my backpack and my hat. I put my hat on the bed, but I put on my backpack.

"Pi \_ka\_ chu?"

\_ 'What are you doing, Ash?' \_

- -

\_ I don't want to do thisâ€|â€|but it's the only wayâ€| \_

- -

I took out all of my PokÃ©balls and set them next to Pikachu.

"Pik?"

\_ 'What are you doing?' \_

- -

I took a deep breath.

"â€|Pikachu?"

"Chu?"

\_ 'Yeah?' \_

- -

"â€|I want you to take care of these thingsâ€|while I'm goneâ€| "

"Pika \_pi\_!!"

\_ 'What are you talking about!?' \_

- -

I knelt down to look it eye-to-eye.

"â€|Pikachu, I'm not going to leave you forever, okay? I'll come back, I promise."

"Pikaâ€|chu?"

\_ 'Why are you leaving anyway?' \_

- -

I sighed. "Becauseâ€|it's the only way? I wish there was another one, butâ€|as long as I have PokÃ©mon with me, the boss is going to want me to be on Team Rocketâ€|I don't want that, and I know you don't eitherâ€| "

"Pikaâ€|pi?"

\_'Soâ€|you're leaving? '\_

--

I nodded. "Don't come after me, okay, Pikachu? And make sure no one else does eitherâ€|â€|Hereâ€|You can come with me until we're out of the headquartersâ€|Then I want you to go to the PokÃ©mon Center and stay with themâ€|"

"Pika?"

\_'What about Billie? '\_

--

"â€|I'll write her a noteâ€|"

I searched through the room for a piece of paper and a pen, then wrote her a quick note.

"Billie,

Get the rest of my PokÃ©mon from the boss, and then go to the PokÃ©mon Center.

Ash"

"â€|I think that'll work."

I put it out in the open, then turned to Pikachu.

"Ready?"

"Piiâ€|pikapiâ€|"

\_'Uhâ€|No. Hold on a secondâ€| '\_

--

Pikachu gathered up all of my PokÃ©balls, then jumped on the bed and tried to pick up the rest of my stuff.

"Uhâ€|don't worry about that, Pikachu," I said.

"Pika, pikachu!"

\_'But we can't just leave them here! '\_

--

"Sure we can. Billie will bring them along, I'm sure."

"Chuâ€|"

\_'If you say soâ€| '\_

--

After a quick decision, Pikachu grabbed my hat and put it on. It was a little bigâ€|

I laughed. "Oh, I get it. You wanna be a trainer too, huh?" I took off my PokÃ©belt and tossed it to Pikachu. "Here, try this on for size."

We had to do a lot of adjusting, but we finally got my things to fit okay on Pikachu. That included my PokÃ©balls.

"Let's go," I said finally.

"Pikachu."

\_'Okay.'\_

--

We went outside. It was windy, and the sky was overcast. I looked down at Pikachu.

"â€|I guessâ€|I'll see you later thenâ€|huh, buddy?"

"Piikaâ€|"

\_'I guess soâ€|'\_

--

I smiled sadly. I knelt down and hugged Pikachu tightly.

"Don't worry," I said, "I'll come back. I'm not going to lose you again, Pikachuâ€|I promise."

"Pikachuâ€|"

\_'I trust youâ€|'\_

--

"Thanksâ€|"

I let go and stood up. This was going to be hard, but I had to do it anyway.

"â€|I'll miss  
youâ€|â€|Goodâ€|byeâ€|"

"Piâ€|â€|kaâ€|"

\_'Byeâ€|â€|Ashâ€|'\_

--

Before I had the time to change my mind, I started running. I didn't look back. I didn't pay attention to where I was going. I just ran. I had to get away from there before it was too late. I couldn't turn back.

## 19. Exile

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 19

### Chapter 19

"Exile"

I ran for a long time. I didn't know where I was going, and it didn't matter all that much anyway. As long as it was away from those people, I didn't care. I couldn't go someplace with a lot of people. They would just send me back. I was running into the wilderness. I was not going to turn back.

It was getting dark fast. A lot faster than normal. The wind picked up, and I finally recognized it as a storm. The rain started falling, lightly at first, then gradually with more power and coldness.

I was soaking by the time night had fallen. I slowed down. All that running had tired me out. I looked at my surroundings. A large tree was nearby, next to a big, grassy field. Behind me was nothing but more grass and some small trees. I decided I had run far enough. It was time to set up camp for the night.

A flash of lightning lit up the sky briefly. It was followed by a quick boom of thunder. I tried to ignore the wind howling through my ears and the rain driving me down.

I took off my backpack and searched for the tent that I rarely used, because it was too hard to set up. I found it, and took it out. I left my backpack next to a fallen log. I tried to find a good spot to set up the tent, but they all looked bad, plus the growing rain was making it harder and harder to see clearly.

\_This is a good a place as any,\_ I decided, picking a random spot on the ground. I stuck one of the poles in the ground, and gripping the tent in my other hand I walked about five feet and stuck the other pole in the ground, or I tried. I must have hit a rock, because it didn't go in right away. I held the tent cover under my arm and used both hands to shove the pole in the ground. It wasn't easy. Just as I got it in there, a huge gust of wind hit me and the rest of the tent flew into the air.

"Wait!!"

It tumbled along swiftly. If I ran fast enough, maybe I couldâ€¦|

I ran as fast as I could. I was getting closer. I grabbed at it, but the wind carried it up high above my head.

I don't know exactly what happened next, but suddenly, all I could see was a bright light. It surrounded me, hurting me. It was a familiar feeling. It reminded me ofâ€¦|Pikachu.

\* \* \*

I woke up to find myself lying in one of many slightly drying mud puddles. I pushed myself up painfully and looked around. The sun was up. The storm had passed. That meant I had been out for at least a night.



I got up and went back to the tree where I had left my stuff. They were all gone, of course.

\_That figuresâ€|Just when I need them the most, a storm comes and blows them all awayâ€|Oh wellâ€|I guess I'll just have to do this by myselfâ€|\_

--

\_â€|That's not gonna be easyâ€|\_

--

I knew I couldn't stay out in the open. Surely the boss had already sent out his Rockets to come and search for me. I had to stay on move.

\_This is goodâ€|I'm a fugitiveâ€|and I'm not even running from the policeâ€|\_

--

Actually, it might have been a good thing if I had run into the police, but I hadn't, and it was too late for that now. I had to keep running.

Now that the storm was gone, I could see where I was better. Across the field was a thick forest. It looked like a good place to head to.

I did just that. It took a little while to get there, but once I did, I was glad. It was drier in the forest. I probably wasn't going to be able to get the mud off of me anytime soon, but that wasn't really important. All I had to do was hide out long enough for the boss to give up on me. Then I could go back, get Pikachu and my other PokÃ©mon, and finally get on with my life. It seemed like a good planâ€|

As I walked, I started to regret not bringing Pikachu with me, but I reminded myself that it was very important that Pikachu stayed with the others. If I had brought it with me, then the boss would be extra mad at me, and he would really make sure I was found soon. Since I hadn't brought Pikachu, he wouldn't think that it was too big of a dealâ€|right?

â€|The woods weren't tooâ€|woody. It was easy to walk through without having a lot of trees and stuff getting in the way.

I kept walking until I found myself at a small clearing. There was some dried out grass coming out of the ground, and some small rocks, but the most noticeable thing was the huge tree right at the very edge.

It towered up above the other trees. I had to crane my neck to see its crown. As I looked at it, I suddenly realized that I knew what it was. Normally, all trees looked the same to me. They weren't my specialty; PokÃ©mon were. But Mom had made sure that I recognized this tree when I saw it. We had one in our backyard, and she always told me to remember it, because we had the same name.

"Hi, Ash" I said quietly then I started giggling, because I was talking to a tree.

I checked myself, then walked into the middle of the clearing and faced the tree. There was a huge, triangular-ish hole right above its roots. I went over to it and peeked inside. There wasn't much in there.

"Well you've got yourself a nice hole" I told Ash.

It didn't say anything back.

"Um Heh, I must look pretty silly, huh? Um Y'know I can't keep walking around. I probably oughta find a place to stay and um you uh You wouldn't mind if I" "

It didn't look like it minded.

"Uh, I didn't think so. Um Thanks, Ash!"

It looked as though I would be staying with Ash for a while, so I decided that I might as well get to know the area. Since I was going to be camping there without any supplies, I needed to be able to provide for myself. I had never done anything like that before, but I figured that it couldn't be too hard

A short distance to the right of Ash's clearing was a small stream. That solved my water needs. I took a quick drink, then started looking for food. I hadn't eaten anything all day, and it was already past noon.

I found some berries that I couldn't remember Mom telling me were poisonous, so I figured they were safe to eat. I snacked on those for a while, but they weren't very filling. I tried some other plant foods, but they either they didn't taste good, or they weren't able to fill my stomach.

I learned what I needed to do when I chanced upon a very small Pidgey. It was pecking at the ground, eating worms and stuff, when a Mankey suddenly pounced on it. I remember every move that it made very clearly.

First, it hammered it brutally with its fists, pounding it into the ground, making it unable to escape. After it had bruised it significantly, it broke both of its wings. With a powerful punch, it finally knocked it unconscious, then didn't hesitate to break its neck. With that done, the Mankey picked up the Pidgey, leapt into a tree and scampered away.

I had never seen anything like that before. I was stunned. I don't know how long I just stood there going over the whole scene in my mind.

\_That Pidgey didn't stand a chance\_

Finally, I turned around and went back to Ash. I crawled inside of it and sat there by myself. I had lost my appetite. I didn't really want to be there anymore, but I knew I couldn't go back.

\_If I go up against the bossâ€|then I'll be just as likely to winâ€|as that Pidgeyâ€|\_

--

I shut my eyes as tight as I could and willed myself to sleep.

How was I supposed to know that I would soon become just as ruthless as that Mankey?

\* \* \*

I learned quickly that if I was going to survive in the wild, I had to live by their rules, which clearly stated: Eat or be eaten.

I wasn't a PokÃ©mon. I didn't have the natural ability to kill. I couldn't creep up on them and pounce, like they did. I had to either trap them or attack from a distance.

I was lucky there was good supply of fruits, because I really wasn't good at huntingâ€|at first. I wasn't able to catch anything for the first few days. I set up a few traps, Team Rocket style, but nothing ever happened to wander in. I also made some crude weapons.

At first, I just tried to pounce on my prey, like the Mankey did, but they always ran away before I could even get close. That forced me to make some throwing weapons. I had no idea where to start, so I just gathered together a bunch of stuff that looked like they could do some damage. I picked up a lot of rocks from nearby the creek, and I also broke off some strong branches from nearby trees. I didn't take any from Ash though.

The sticks were useless. I didn't have anything to modify them with, so I just stashed them inside of Ash in case I ever did find a use for them.

I was able to find a use for the stones though. If I chipped them away the right way, I could make them sharp. In my experience, sharp things were painful.

When I had made a good supply, I picked up a few and went out hunting. I didn't think I would be able to catch anything. I never had before.

One thing that I had learned was to be as quiet as possible. PokÃ©mon usually have very good senses, so it was good to keep a low profile. I did just that. I was careful not to step on any dried up vegetation, and I also tried to keep myself hidden. I guess I didn't do that bad of a job. I had wandered for a little while, when I heard a soft stirring just in front of me. I froze and tried to see what it was.

A light tan creature was poking through some bushes. It was small, walked on four legs, and had a curly tail. Its ears were black, and there was something on its foreheadâ€|

It turned its head in my direction, and I suddenly knew what it was.

\_Meowthâ€|\_

--

It stared at me for a while, but it didn't see me, because I was right behind a bush, and I wasn't moving at all. It decided that there wasn't anything there and continued to mind its own business. I picked out a stone without looking away from the Meowth and gripped it tightly. Its sharp edges bit into my hand.

\_I can't do it.\_

--

I never wanted to kill anything. I preferred to capture Pok  mon in Pok  balls and train them. I had never thought about killing one myself and then eating it  

\_This Meowth never did anything to me  It's just a wild Pok  mon minding its own business.\_

--

I continued to watch it, and it continued to just stand there. It seemed to be sniffing at the plant, but I couldn't see what was so interesting about that plant.

\_Come on, Ash  It'll be over in a second  \_

--

Then what? What would I do after that? Bring it back to Ash and  cook it?

\_I'm not a cook. I'll probably burn it  \_

--

\_  It's better than nothing.\_

--

I was tense. I couldn't bring myself to move, but I knew I couldn't just back down.

\_Just throw the rock already! It won't feel a thing.\_

--

  That's what I wanted to think.

\_It's eat or be eaten. Do you want to starve to death?\_

--

I answered myself.

\_No.\_

--

The Meowth sat down and yawned. It glanced around one more time, then started walking towards a nearby tree.

\_It's now or never.\_

--

I quickly took aim, shut my eyes as tight as I could, then hurled the rock at the Meowth with all of my strength. I heard a thud and a crackâ€¦Then there was silence.

I waited at least a minute before I finally opened my eyes.

The Meowth was lying on the ground in an unnatural position. Gathering up my courage, I moved the bush aside and went closer. I stood over it in total shock.

Its eyes were open. They stared straight ahead, unblinking. Its body was completely still. Blood was flowing from a large wound just behind its left ear. It stained its fur and trickled down its side. The rock that I had thrown lay nearby. It was halfway coated with dark red blood.

After a very long time, I was able to partially shake off my shock.

\_It'sâ€¦deadâ€¦\_

--

Unable to take my eyes off of it, I knelt down.

\_Iâ€¦Iâ€¦killedâ€¦it.\_

--

I felt a knot form in my throat. It became harder to breathe, and my eyes began to sting. I reached out and closed its eyes.

I closed my eyes tooâ€¦but that couldn't stop my tears.

## 20. Two Weeks

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 20

### Chapter 20

#### "Two Weeks"

I did eat the Meowth. It was hard to cook it. It took me a while to actually light a fire, and then there was the matter ofâ€¦wellâ€¦I didn't like it. Both the taste, and the fact that I was actually eating it. I would've felt guilty either way though. If I hadn't eaten it, I would've felt bad for killing it for no good reason. Stillâ€¦

The meat was very tough. I had done a bad job of both cooking it and skinning it. I hadn't liked either job and had kept my eyes shut

throughout most of it. I couldn't even watch myself eatâ€|

But time passedâ€|and I became betterâ€|â€|colder tooâ€|I learned how to look without really watching. The killingâ€|the eatingâ€|they just became habitualâ€|something that didn't take thoughtâ€|I don't know where my conscience wandered off to during those timesâ€|but I know that it disappearedâ€|I started thinking less and less. Everything was done automatically. I began to forgetâ€|but not entirely. As long as I stayed with Ashâ€|I couldn't forgetâ€|Ash was meâ€|I was Ashâ€|and Pikachu was still waiting for meâ€|

Pikachuâ€|I did think about Pikachu. I thought about how much better off Pikachu was without me. If I had dragged it along with meâ€|â€|I didn't want to think about what would have happened if I had brought Pikachu with me. I hadn't. That was enough.

I wondered if Pikachu was happy. Pikachu was with its friends nowâ€|Mistyâ€|Brockâ€|Togepiâ€|It didn't need me. As long as Boss Rocket thought I belonged to him, no one needed meâ€|

â€|Did I really need me?

It was times like that when I sank back into my thoughtless state. I either just sat there and thought about nothing, went for a walk, or fell asleepâ€|

â€|but sleep wasn't as peaceful as being awake. My conscience came to life there and tortured me. Making me confess to every murder I had committedâ€|and I could remember them all, despite being unaware at the timeâ€|It told me that I had backed down on my friends. That I was despicable. I had abandoned everyoneâ€|and for what? No one had gained anything, it said. No one had benefitedâ€|And I had lostâ€|my lifeâ€|even though I appeared to still be living itâ€|My conscience told me the truth. That I was just faking it. Ash Ketchum had died days ago. I was no longer him. I didn't have a nameâ€|Even the PokÃ©mon had namesâ€|and the treesâ€|and the groundâ€|â€|but I didn'tâ€|I wasn't worthy.

I wish I could've said something in reply to my dreamsâ€|but I couldn't do anything about it. I was helpless. There was no escaping the truth.

\* \* \*

There was a change in my routine one day. While I was returning to Ash from aâ€|huntâ€|(murder is more like itâ€|)â€|I sensed something different in the clearing. Keeping a low profile, I crept back, slowly. I held my latest catch, another Meowth (they seemed to be plentiful in these woods) close to me so it wouldn't make noise. When I was within range of the clearing I stopped and watched.

\_â€|It can't beâ€|\_

--

That thought entered my head, nearly breaking me out of my trance. I fought it and kept still.

"Venomothâ€|are you sure this is the place?"

"Venomoth!"

It was a girlâ€¦in a Team Rocket uniformâ€¦She had a Venomoth with herâ€¦

"â€¦Wellâ€¦I guess if I was going to hole up in the woods for two weeks, this is as good a place as any to do itâ€¦"

\_Billieâ€¦\_

--

I felt my jaw loosening. I closed it and continued to watch.

\_How did she find me?\_

--

Billie cupped her hands around her mouth. "Ash! Ash, are you out here!? Ash, please answer me! Please! I need to talk to you!"

\_I can't do thatâ€¦â€¦Ash is deadâ€¦\_

--

"Ash, please! Please! I know you're here! Just let me talk to you!"

\_I've never heard anyone this noisyâ€¦I wonder what it'll take to get her to shut upâ€¦?\_

--

"Venomoth! Venomoth, veno!"

"Huhâ€¦? You see something else, Venomoth?" she asked.

"Venomoth!" Venomoth replied, nodding.

It looked in my direction and started flapping towards me.

\_No. Don't come over hereâ€¦\_

--

I gritted my teeth. I needed a distractionâ€¦My hand drifted over one of my rocksâ€¦

\_Yeahâ€¦That oughta do itâ€¦\_

--

Taking careful aim, I launched one at another melon-sized rock sticking out of the ground. It whistled past Venomoth, missing it by just a hair, and crashed loudly with the other rock.

Both the PokÃ©mon and its trainer turned in alarm.

"What was that!?" Billie cried.

I stood up. It had been a long time since I had talked to anyoneâ€|besides Ash, of courseâ€|I hoped that I could still do it.

"â€|Prepare for troubleâ€|" I coughed.

Okay. It was kinda lame, now that I think about it, but it was the best I could come up with at the time.

Billie whizzed around at the same speed she had when I had thrown the rock.

"Ash!?! " she exclaimed.

I nodded slightly. I was having trouble thinking of something else to sayâ€|

Billie's stare slowly moved from my face and she finally got a good look at me â€|Her expression was some mix of shock, amazement, and horror. She froze when she saw what I was holding in my hand.

She began her sentence quite a few times before managing to spit it out.

"Whâ€|Wh-whatâ€|i-isâ€|â€|th-thatâ€|?"

I glanced down, suddenly self-conscious. I was a messâ€|filthyâ€|definitely not presentable in public, andâ€|â€|I was holding a dead PokÃ©monâ€|

I blinked at it, trying to think of something to say.

"â€|Uhâ€|â€|It'sâ€|â€|aâ€|â€|Meowth?"

There was a pause.

"Wellâ€|ermâ€|yeahâ€|Iâ€|â€|I guess it isâ€|" She swallowed.

"â€|Billie, what are you doing here?" I finally asked.

She looked me in the eyes, something no one had done recently. It was unnerving.

"I came here to find you, Ash. And now that I did, I'm bringing you back with me."

"You can't do that," I whispered.

"I can, and I will!" she retorted, "Now come on. Pikachu is waiting for you."

\_Please don't bring Pikachu into thisâ€|\_

--

"No, you don't understandâ€|" I said quietly, "I can't go backâ€|"



"What are you talking about? Sure you can! It's easy. Just follow me. I'll take you someplace where you can take a bathâ€¦change into something decentâ€¦It'll be no problem! We'll just forget about this wholeâ€¦â€¦thing."

\_Does she really believe that?\_

--

"It isn't that easy, Billieâ€¦â€¦Do you even know why I came out here in the first place?"

She gave me an analyzing look. I fidgeted under her stare.

"No, Ashâ€¦Honestlyâ€¦I don't."

"I left because I had nowhere else to turn. I couldn't stay with Team Rocket. I couldn't live the rest of my life as aâ€¦criminalâ€¦I couldn't leave my PokÃ©mon withâ€¦â€¦\_him\_â€¦I justâ€¦I couldn'tâ€¦â€¦but I can't go back now. I can't go back until I \_know\_ that my PokÃ©mon are safe. I justâ€¦"

I felt a tear slid down my cheek. I didn't wipe it off.

Billie didn't say anything for a long time.

"Wellâ€¦â€¦I'm not leaving until you are."

I jerked my head up.

"What!?"

"The boss gave me very strict instructions. He said I had one week to find you and bring you back. Another group tried and failed, and I'm already overdueâ€¦If I come back empty-handedâ€¦â€¦" She shuddered.

\_I knowâ€¦I know what the boss does if you don't follow the rulesâ€¦\_

--

"Stillâ€¦you can't stay here," I said.

"I have every right to stay here!" she said, "I found you, and I'm not leaving without you, and that's that."

She looked pretty determinedâ€¦but I couldn't have her staying there and messing everything up.

"Billieâ€¦what ifâ€¦the bossâ€¦was wondering why you didn't come backâ€¦and he sent someone out to find you? Then we'd both be in trouble."

"You'd be in more trouble than meâ€¦â€¦but that's why you have to come back! Please, Ash?"

"Noâ€¦Justâ€¦â€¦just tell himâ€¦Tell him that I'm dead. Say that you found me, but I was dead. Tell him that there's no need to keep looking for me."

\_Actually, that's not too far from the truthâ€|\_

"Ashâ€|if I tell him that you're deadâ€|I'll need proofâ€|"

\_Proof?\_

--

"What kind of proof? A dead body?"

Now she looked disturbed.

"Wellâ€|I was kinda hoping I wouldn't need proofâ€|that you would just comeâ€|"

"Wellâ€|I'm not coming."

"â€|Then I'm not leavingâ€|"

Another moment of silence.

"You're really serious about this, aren't you?" we said at the same time.

"â€|Wellâ€|I know \_I\_ am," Billie said.

"I'm serious," I said.

She narrowed her eyes.

"How can you be serious, Ash? You're a mess. You're living inside of a tree. I don't \_know\_ when was the last time you took a bath. You're eating wild PokÃ©monâ€|How could you possibly want to stay here?"

"Because I can't leave. I don't have a choice, Billie. If I could, I would say yes, and we could both go back to Viridian and have a jolly good time. But we can't, so we won't."

She looked at the ground. Finally, she walked over to Ash and sat down. She took off her backpack and opened it.

"Well, as long as I'm staying, we might as well eat something decent."

She took out a bag of hard-tack biscuits and held one out.

"You want one?"

I nearly dropped the Meowth. I could feel my mouth watering already. It was the most appetizing thing I ever seen.

## 21. Hyper Fang

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 21

Chapter 21

"Hyper Fang"

No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get Billie to leave without me. She always could come up with a better excuse than I couldâ€|Maybe it came from actually being in contact with humans for the past two weeksâ€|

She asked me what I had been doing while I had been here by myselfâ€|I told her what little I thought she could actually care to knowâ€|I didn't tell her about how my conscience only surfaced during my dreamsâ€|and how, when it did, it only sought to make me miserableâ€|â€|I didn't tell her how much I had cried after my first killâ€|or how many PokÃ©mon I had ended up killingâ€|I didn't tell her how glad I was that I didn't have to kill anymore, since she had been smart enough to bring food with herâ€|

"â€|You still haven't told me why you left, anywayâ€|"

"â€|Yes I did."

She shook her head. "No you didn'tâ€|Not really, anywayâ€|Come on. Tell me in plain English."

I couldn't tell her anything that I hadn't already told her, because that was all there was to it. I wasn't hiding anythingâ€|Well, not muchâ€|

I heard a faint rustle in the bushesâ€|

"â€|Ash?"

"Sh."

It was coming from the right. I reached back and picked up one of my rocksâ€|Whoever was there didn't sound friendlyâ€|

There was a sudden crash, and two humans stumbled into the clearing. They were wearing the black version of the Team Rocket uniform, and they looked familiarâ€|

"Ahemâ€|" said the girl.

They started reciting their mottoâ€|

"Prepare for trouble and make it double," they said together.

"To infect the world with devastation."

"To blight all peoples in every nation."

"To denounce the goodness of truth and love."

"To extend our wrath to the stars  
above."

"Cassidy."

"Butch."

"We're Team Rocket, circling earth all day and night."

"Surrender to us now, or you will surely lose the fight."

"Raticate!!"

"Not you two! What are you doing here!?" Billie exclaimed.

"Exactly what I was about to ask youâ€|\_Billie\_,\" Cassidy replied with a sneer.

"â€|I've seen you beforeâ€|\" I said, mostly to myself.

"Hmmâ€|Oh yeah. You were one of those kids who were trying to steal from our PokÃ©mon spa,\" Butch nodded.

"And got us arrestedâ€|\" Cassidy said with a frown.

"Hello!\" Billie interrupted, \"I repeat, what are you two doing here?\"

"You silly Billieâ€|\" Cassidy chided, \"At least let us finish our introductions before you start hounding us with questions.\"

"The introductions are over! Now tell us why you're here!\"

\_Wowâ€|I've never seen her this upset beforeâ€|\_

--

Cassidy sighed. \"If you insistâ€|\" She glanced at Butch and they exchanged nods. \"We are here to bring the both of you back to Viridianâ€|The boss wants to know why it's taking you so long to bringâ€|Ash, was it?â€|back. He's very upset.\"

"Wellâ€|\" Billie said nervously.

"I'm not going back,\" I stated.

The two newcomers stared at me.

"Andâ€|why not?\" Cassidy asked.

"Because.\"

They continued to stare at me, and finally they burst out laughing.

"You don't have a choice, kid! If the boss wants you back, then you're going back!\"

"So let's hurry up,\" Butch added.

"Come on. We don't have all day.\"

I glanced at Billie. She was looking at her feet.

\_Probably doesn't want them here just as much as I don'tâ€|\_

--

"Iâ€|'mâ€|notâ€|leavingâ€|" I said quietly.

Cassidy growled. "That's not the answer I was looking for, you little brat. Now come \_on\_."

She walked towards me, with Butch close behind. My fist tightened on the rock in my hand. I didn't want to hurt them, but if they were gonna play roughâ€|

She grabbed my arm and yanked, hard. I gritted my teeth and stayed seated.

"Come on," she grunted, "Don't make this any harder than it has to beâ€|"

I let go of my rock and found a good grip on one of Ash's roots.

"Get up, kid," Butch warned, "You don't want us to have to force you to comeâ€|"

Cassidy pulled using both hands. I wished I could both hands against her, but she was holding on to one of them, so I didn'tâ€|I held on to Ash for dear life.

She kicked me in the ribs.

"Let's get going, you imbecile! You don't want to force us to hurt youâ€|"

\_What is she talking about? That kick hurt!\_

--

"Just let me go, and maybeâ€|we can talk about thisâ€|likeâ€|adults," I replied.

"Adults? You're not an adult! Why would I talk to you like one?"

I tried to grab onto Ash with my other hand, but she kneed me this time, and I almost lost my grip.

I noticed that Billie was still staring at her feet.

"Billie! Give me a hand!" I said.

She looked at me for a brief moment, then turned away and pretended like she wasn't there.

\_You littleâ€|â€|\_

"Hey, Cassidy," Butch said, "Should we start playin' rough?"

"Rrrâ€|Yeah. Now's a good time."

"Alright then! Raticate! I choose you!"

I glanced over my shoulder and past Cassidy and saw their pet rat staring at me.

\_Now whatâ€|?\_

--

After a hard tug, Cassidy let go and I fell forward onto myself. I don't know exactly how I did that, but I did.

"Raticate! Quick Attack!" Butch said.

\_Say what? Who's he battling against? I don't have any PokÃ©mon with meâ€|\_

--

"Ow!" I shouted in surprise, as their Raticate slammed into me.

"Cate!"

I glared at their overgrown rodent.

\_They can't attack \_me\_! I'm not a PokÃ©mon!\_

--

I picked up my rock.

"So you wanna play roughâ€|?" I whispered.

"Quick Attack!" Butch said again.

Raticate slammed into me again before I could block.

"Whâ€|What are you doing!?" Billie asked.

\_It's about time you woke upâ€|\_

--

"He's not cooperating," Cassidy replied, "We're teaching him how."

"Butâ€|!"

I grabbed onto Ash's trunk and pulled myself up.

\_I'm not gonna lose to a ratâ€|\_

--

"â€|Butch?" Cassidy said after a moment.

"What?" he asked.

"What does he have in his hand?"

They all turned their heads toward me. I looked down at my rock. It's edge glinted in the light.

"â€|Looks like a very sharp rock," Butch said.

"Better watch out," said Cassidy.

"Got it covered," said Butch, "Raticate! Use your Hyper Fang attack!"

\_â€|Hyper Fang?\_

--

"Rrrâ€|Raticate!!"

Raticate jumped towards me. I got a \_really\_ good look at its incisorsâ€|

\_Yepâ€|Those are some hyper fangsâ€|â€|andâ€|they'reâ€|comingâ€|rightâ€|towardsâ€|meâ€|\_

--

"Ah!"

I blocked at the last second. It's huge teeth chomped down on both of my arms in one bite, but it still wasn't finished. After getting some leverage, it loosened its grip and used its top teeth to tear straight down from my face to the ground.

"Ash!!" I heard Billie shriek.

\_Ouchâ€|\_

I didn't move. I didn't open my eyes. I could feel the tear, cold and burning, ripping me apartâ€|but I didn't want to look at itâ€|

"\_Ash!!\_"

I opened one eye. The first thing I saw was Cassidy, Butch, and their Raticate, all staring at me smugly. Raticate had blood dripping from its mouthâ€|

I dared to look downâ€|and immediately wished that I hadn't.

I could see the bones in my armsâ€|brokenâ€|and covered with red bloodâ€|My shirtâ€|was destroyedâ€|revealingâ€|more bloodâ€|flowingâ€|downwardsâ€|drippingâ€|

\_Is that really meâ€|?\_

--

"Ash!!" Billie cried again. "â€|Why did you do that to him!?"

"I'm sure he'll be more agreeable nowâ€|" Cassidy said.

The world suddenly toppled to one side, and I struggled to regain my

balance.

\_What on earthâ€|?\_

--

"Hang on, Ashâ€|Pleaseâ€|"

--

Pieces of my vision disappearedâ€|I felt an intense throbbing in my headâ€|It almost covered up the pain I was feeling in the rest of my bodyâ€|I tried to shut it outâ€|but insteadâ€|I thinkâ€|I shut myself outâ€|

## 22. Recovering

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 22

### Chapter 22

"Recovering"

I think my eyes were openâ€|I couldn't tell thoughâ€|I couldn't see anythingâ€|I could just hearâ€|Someone was talking to meâ€|

"â€|You're aliveâ€|That's goodâ€|I took away a large part of their paycheck for being so careless, Ashâ€|I thought you'd be pleased with that."

\_That voiceâ€|\_

The pain in my head returned with sudden fury. I cried out in painâ€|I couldn't thinkâ€|Everything seemed so far awayâ€|

"â€|It will fadeâ€|in time, that isâ€|Either that, or you'll get used to it."

\_Why are you talking to me?\_

--

I became conscious of my breathingâ€|It was painfulâ€|Everything about me seemed to be made up of painâ€|

"Just try to relax, Ashâ€|It will go awayâ€|Just relaxâ€|"

\_Relax? \_You\_ try it!\_

--

"â€|I'm very glad you're still aliveâ€|I was starting to have my doubtsâ€|"

\_Gladâ€|? Why would you care whether I live or die?\_

--



"â€|You're a fine PokÃ©mon trainer, Ashâ€|One of the best I've ever seenâ€|"

\_â€|Is that why?\_

--

"â€|If only those fools knew who they were dealing withâ€|"

\_I wish \_you\_ did.\_

--

"â€|Ashâ€|Did I ever tell you that you have the potential to be one of the best Rockets ever?"

\_â€|No.\_

--

"â€|â€|All you have to do is do what I tell you to, and we'll get along just fine."

\_What if I don't want to do that?\_

--

"â€|â€|I'll let you rest nowâ€|Don't worry. Persian will be watching youâ€|Now, you take good care of him, Persian."

"Perrrrrâ€|"

"â€|Good bye."

\_â€|Good riddance.\_

--

"â€|Sianâ€|"

Something warm leaned against my sideâ€|It felt niceâ€|â€|The warm thing made a soft rumble and it lulled me to sleepâ€|

\* \* \*

The next time I woke up, I was able to see. I was in a dark room. The only light was coming through a window that had the curtains drawnâ€|So, it was pretty dark.

"â€|Sian?"

I blinked sleepily. The warm, rumbling thing was still by my side. I turned my head to see what it was.

"â€|Persian?"

"Perrrrâ€|" it replied.

\_â€|Wish I could understand youâ€|\_

--

The Persian got up and stretched briefly.

"Persian per. Perrrsi anâ€|"

"â€|Huh?"

"â€|Persian."

The Persian sniffed me for a second, then lay down again and yawned.

"Pe errr, si anâ€|"

"â€|What?"

Persian blinked lazily at me. "Peersian," it meowed,  
"Persianâ€|Rrrâ€|"

It closed its eyes again.

\_Wellâ€|\_I'm\_ not tired anymoreâ€|\_

--

I stared at the ceiling, but that got boring pretty quickly. I looked down at my stomach. I had been wrapped inâ€|formerly white bandagesâ€|They were now a mix of white and red. My arms were in the same state.

\_Guess that means I'll be staying here a while longerâ€|â€|Why did they have to sic their Raticate on me anywayâ€|?\_

--

"Err?"

I glanced at the Persian. It had woken up again.

"Perrrsianâ€|Persian," it scolded.

I tried to understand what it was saying, but I could only guess.

"â€|Do you want me to go back to sleep?" I asked.

"Perrrsian," it nodded.

"Ohâ€|Wellâ€|I guessâ€|butâ€|"

It cocked its head to the side.

"Sian?"

"I'm not sleepy."

"Per si aannnâ€|"

"Huh?"

"Persian? Perrrsian?"

"I still don't know what you're saying."

"Persian?"

It lowered its head and dozed off again.

"Don't you ever do anything but sleep?"

"Sian!?"

That had woken it up well.

"Well, It looks to me like all you ever do is sit around, get petted, and sleep. Doesn't that ever get boring?"

"Perrrsianperrrsian?" it muttered to itself.

"Of course you won't admit it!" I continued, "but you know that it's true."

"Persian!" it said suddenly.

It picked itself up and stalked towards the door. It fiddled with the knob and let itself out.

\_Pretty smart, I guess\_

--

There was some conversation on the other side of the door, but the boss finally came in. The Persian was right at his heels, looking a little ticked.

"It looks like you've recovered at least mentally."

"Huh?"

"Yes. You're still the same old Ash."

\_What is he talking about\_

--

"You do realize that I'm not going to let you back on duty until I see fit."

"Huh?"

He looked like he was considering something.

"In other words no Pokémon."

"What!?"

"â€|I knew you had come aroundâ€|Just had to give you a little timeâ€|â€|When you are fully healed, of courseâ€|â€|â€|You'll still be off dutyâ€|just for a little whileâ€|I have to see whether or not I can trust you."

"â€|What?"

"â€|Mostâ€|\_loyal\_â€|Team Rocket membersâ€|don't run off and hide in the woods for two weeksâ€|â€|or even put off duty for a day or soâ€|Which reminds me. Your partner has been suitably punished for not carrying out her mission immediately upon locating your whereaboutsâ€|Just thought I'd let you knowâ€|"

\_â€|suitably punishedâ€|?\_

--

"What did you do to her?"

"Ohâ€|nothing as serious as what you've been through."

\_I hope notâ€|\_

--

"â€|Persian will continue to watch over you until you have fully recoveredâ€|Until thenâ€|"

He tilted his head and left the room.

\_Thatâ€|!\_

--

Persian jumped on the bed again.

"Sianâ€|?"

"Huh?"

"Perâ€|" it sighed.

It crossed over to its spot then lay down again.

I sighed too.

\_Guess I'll have to get used to thisâ€|\_

## 23. Loyalty

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 23

### Chapter 23

#### "Loyalty"

It took a while. I still couldn't understand the Persian, but the boss finally decided that I was well enough to get rid of the

bandages.

"â€|How do you feel?"

"Fineâ€|I guessâ€|"

He raised an eyebrow. "You guess?"

"Wellâ€|Yeah. I feel fine. Happy?"

"â€|I suppose so."

"â€|Huh!?"

He shrugged. "That doesn't matterâ€|Now, as you know, I'm not releasing you quite yetâ€|"

"And you still haven't told me why."

"Actually, I have. The reason isâ€|I can't trust you. As far as I can tell, the minute you step out of this room, you'll just start making plans to run off again. I can't have that, now can I?"

\_Wellâ€|\_he\_ can't, but I don't really mindâ€|Next time, I'll make sure I keep my supplies with me.\_

--

"â€|Can I?" he repeated.

"â€|â€|No."

"Good. I knew you would see things my wayâ€|Ash, I have prepared a very special treat for youâ€|It's because you are such a very special personâ€|" He sneered.

He\_ thinks \_I'm\_ special? Is this some kind of joke?\_

--

He reached inside his jacket and pulled out a smallâ€|tube? I stared at it, trying to figure out what he was up to.

"Ashâ€|I asked you to prove your loyalty to Team Rocket before, and for a brief moment, I thought you had. You have fooled me once, Ashura, but it will not happen again."

\_Ashura!? Why did he call me Ashura? \_No one \_has ever called me Ashuraâ€|for a long, long timeâ€|No one else even \_knows\_ about thatâ€|except for Mom and meâ€|\_

He had a dangerous glint in his eye, and I figured it was better not to askâ€|about \_that\_ at leastâ€|

"â€|Whâ€|Whatâ€|are you goingâ€|to do?" I asked nervously.

He laughed softly. "I thought you would never askâ€|"

He leaned forward. I saw Persian's eyes widen suddenly, and I knew the boss was up to no good. He held out the "tube", and as it got

closer, I could see what it really was.

"Heyâ€|what's that?" I asked, trying to delay or distract him.

"You mean you've never been to the doctor?" he asked quietly, "This, my boy, is similar to a shot. It'll only hurt for a moment, and when it's overâ€|hehhehhehâ€|you'll be a new personâ€|"

\_Whatisthatthingwhatisthatthingwhatisthatthing!!?\_

--

He was getting too close. I tried to push him away, but he just pushed back.

"It's no use struggling, Ash! This is your own fault that I have to do this to you!"

"What are trying to do, anyway!?"

"â€|Make sure that you never disobey me againâ€|"

He slipped his arm out of my hand and plunged the needle into my neck. I let go of him immediately. The pain was incredible. I found it hard to breathe. The room became foggy. I saw his shadow, in front of meâ€|I couldn't see it, but I knew how he was looking at meâ€|sneeringâ€|He defeated me againâ€|

His shape blurred into the background. I felt something cold on my cheek, but I couldn't focus on it. I couldn't focus on anythingâ€|The whole world was slipping away from meâ€|

\_Come back!\_ I begged, but it was no use. It had easily managed to escape.

\* \* \*

\_Reprogramming complete.\_

--

I wasn't awake. I knew that much. But it still seemed strange that I was asleep and conscious of it.

\_â€|What reprogramming?\_

--

\_Your reprogramming.\_

--

\_Huh? I can't be programmedâ€|Who are you, anyway?\_

--

\_I am not a me. I am an itâ€|Your own, personal, computer virus.\_

--

\_â€|Why do I want one of those?\_

\_ \_

\_It doesn't matter if you want one or not. You had one, and now we are reproducing inside of you.\_

\_ \_

\_â€|What's that mean?\_

\_ \_

\_â€|â€|It's probably best for you not to know.\_

\_ \_

\_â€|Oh.\_

\_ \_

\_From now on, you will have no personal thoughts, emotions, or motives. That will all be provided for you.\_

\_ \_

\_â€|How?\_

\_ \_

\_Don't question howâ€|\_

\_ \_

\_â€|Umâ€|â€|â€|Okayâ€|?\_

\_ \_

\_Don't question me. I will provide you only with the undeniable truth. With this knowledge, you will prosper and grow powerfulâ€|\_

\_ \_

\_â€|You're kidding.\_

\_ \_

\_Do not question me.\_

\_ \_

\_â€|â€|Fine. I won't question you. Happy?\_

\_ \_

\_â€|Exceedingly.\_

\_ \_

\* \* \*

"Perrrrrrrsian?"

I blinked my eyes open. That had been the strangest dream I had ever-

"Ah! Uhhhâ€|" I gasped suddenly.

I felt like someone had clubbed me over the head. I had a huge, pounding headacheâ€|and I mean it when I say pounding. I could practically hear the blood pumping through my brain, pushing the nerve endings up against the wall of my skull, trying to either break my head open or kill my brain.

I clutched my head and groaned in agony. I had been better off when I had been bitten by that Raticate. At least I didn't have to \_feel\_ the pain that it had caused meâ€|

"Peerrrrrrrsianâ€|" Persian meowed softly.

I guess it knew that I wasn't enjoying myself, and it wanted to comfort me. It rubbed its head against mine, and when I didn't like that, it started licking my face.

"Enhhâ€|Heyâ€|â€|Hey, stop thatâ€|Owchâ€|You're tongue is sharp, you stupid catâ€|" I mumbled.

I let go with one hand to try to push it away, but it kept on licking.

"Stop it, Persianâ€|"

It licked my eye and I couldn't help but laugh.

"Stopâ€|" I said again.

It moved down my cheek and started licking my ear.

"Wh-why are you doing this?" I asked, laughing more and more, "That doesn't feel good, you know!"

"Pe-rrrrrrâ€|" it rumbled softly, then started rubbing against me again.

"Aahâ€|Quit itâ€|"

The Persian lay down across my chest and continued to both rub and lick me until I completely forgot about my headache and was laughing steadily and quietly.

"You're a silly cat, you know that?"

"Peerrrrrrâ€|" it replied.

"How much do you weigh? I'm having trouble breathing, here," I said jokingly.

"Perrrsian." It rubbed its head against mine.



"â€|â€|Thanksâ€|"

"Siianâ€|" it meowed.

I smiled. It was nice to know that there was \_someone\_ in Team Rocket who cared about me.

## 24. To Unite All Peoples

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 24

### Chapter 24

"To Unite All Peoples"

"â€|How are you, Ash?"

"I'm fine," I replied.

"That's goodâ€|Has there been any trouble?"

"â€|Not too much," I told him.

"â€|That'sâ€|very good to hear, Ashâ€|I'm proud of you."

"Thank you."

"Hmâ€|Are you ready to be released?"

"I'm ready when you are."

"â€|You are quite the model Rocket. Both skilled and disciplined. Just what I knew you had in youâ€|You just needed a little help, that's all."

"â€|Everything's fine now."

"Then there's no point in you staying here. Go to your room and wait for Billieâ€|â€|â€|Ohâ€|I'm so glad everything worked out okay. I wasn't sure if you were supposed to pass out or notâ€|When you were asleepâ€|you looked soâ€|distracted. It was as if you were having a nightmareâ€|"

I laughed nervously. "Ohâ€|That? Aâ€|nightmare? Uhâ€|Nahâ€|Not reallyâ€|uhâ€|hehâ€|hehâ€|"

"â€|Very well then."

\* \* \*

I waited patiently for Billie to arriveâ€|Well, it was boring, butâ€|â€|who cares about that anyway?

The door creaked open and I looked up. It was Billie, of course.

"Hello, Ashâ€|" she said quietly.

"Hi."

"Umâ€|ahemâ€|umâ€|"

She stood in the doorway and shifted her weight from foot to foot.

"â€|Aren't you going to come in?" I asked.

"Uhâ€|I guess soâ€|Umâ€|Yeahâ€|Why not?" She laughed a nervous laugh.

She came in and closed the door behind her. She glanced at me, then crossed the room and pretended to be interested in something on the wall.

"â€|What's the matter?"

"Huh!?" She glanced back then quickly turned away.

"Ohâ€|umâ€|nothingâ€|Nothing at allâ€|Hehâ€|heh hehâ€|" She gulped.

"â€|Is something wrong?"

"Wr-wrong?! Huh!? Ohâ€|Nothing's wrongâ€|Nothing'sâ€|wrongâ€|"

"â€|Something's wrong," I said.

"Nothing'sâ€|â€|\_wrong\_â€|Ashâ€|â€|It's justâ€|â€|umâ€|Iâ€|I dunnoâ€|" she sighed, "It's just thatâ€|He kept you in there for such a long timeâ€|even after you recoveredâ€|Iâ€|I don't want to think of what he might have done to youâ€|what punishmentâ€|he could'veâ€|â€|" She trailed off. I thought I could hear her trying to hold back a sob.

"â€|I'm fine, Billie. What he did to meâ€|â€|Well, it's all over now, and I'm better for itâ€|It's all right now. He won't punish me againâ€|because I'm not going to disobey him again."

Her half-sobbing disappeared. She turned around slowly. I met her gaze and saw her staring at me with wide eyes.

"â€|You can't mean thatâ€|" she whispered.

I nodded. "Sure I do. There's no reason not to listen to the boss. He's only trying to help us, and the more we try \_not\_ to listen him, the more hurt we'll end up. It's better to just do what he says right from the start and not worry about anything else."

Now her mouth was hanging open. I waited for her to say something. I waited for quite a while.

"â€|Iâ€|can'tâ€|believe youâ€|" she breathed, "After all this time ofâ€|of \_hating\_ him, you're going to just buckle down after one littleâ€|" She gasped and covered her mouth, but finally lowered her hands so she could speak. "â€|Ashâ€|â€|He must have done something \_terrible\_ to you to make you justâ€|â€|Oh Ashâ€|â€|I'm so sorryâ€|â€|Iâ€|â€|"

She almost started crying on me.

I grinned at her.

"Billie, don't worry about it. It's over now. I'm betterâ€¦ Everything's gonna be fineâ€¦ Come on. We're supposed to get ready to go back to the Indigo Plateau."

She still looked tearful, but she nodded.

"Rightâ€¦" she said, her voice muffled by her hands, which were covering her mouth again, "â€¦ We should getâ€¦ goingâ€¦ â€¦"

\* \* \*

We went to the PokÃ©mon Center first. Pikachu was there, and so were Brock, Misty, Togepi, and Richie. I knew I should've been glad to see themâ€¦ especially Pikachuâ€¦ butâ€¦ instead, I feltâ€¦ nothing. I put on a smile anyway and pretended. I hugged Pikachu and joked casually with the others, but I didn't really mean it. For some reason, I didn't care. I didn't like the fact that I didn't care, but I couldn't even care about that, either.

\_What is happening to meâ€¦?\_

--

That thought was in my head for less than a second, and then I forgot that I had even thought it.

"So are you ready to go back to the Indigo Plateau?" Richie asked.

I smiled at him. "You bet. Now that I have all of my PokÃ©mon with me, andâ€¦ my littleâ€¦ adventureâ€¦ is over, nothing can stop meâ€¦ Right, Pikachu?"

"Pika!"

\_ 'I hope so!' \_

--

I laughedâ€¦ I thinkâ€¦ I couldn't tell if I was faking it or notâ€¦ and then, the next second, I couldn't care less.

--

"â€¦ Do you know which PokÃ©mon you're going to use?" Billie asked me.

"Hmâ€¦ I know I'm going to use Pikachuâ€¦"

"If you're going to use Pikachu, you might as well give Magnemite back to the boss. There's really no point in carrying around two electric PokÃ©mon."

"Yeah, I guess you have a point thereâ€¦ â€¦ Hey, I wonder if Pidgeotto's better?"

"Probablyâ€|You left it with him a long time ago, remember?"

"Oh yeahâ€|"

"So what other PokÃ©mon will you use?" asked Richie.

"Umâ€|Bulbasaurâ€|Squirtleâ€|Pidgeottoâ€|â€|"

"That's four down, two to go," Misty grinned.

"Umâ€|â€|I think I'll bring Taper, too," I said.

"That's a good idea," Misty said, "You can't go wrong with a psychic PokÃ©mon."

"Uhâ€|I know thatâ€|That's why I'm bringing it," I said.

"What's your other PokÃ©mon gonna be?" asked Brock.

"Umâ€|Sandslash."

"â€|â€|It looks like we've gotta go back to the HQ," Billie said.

"Yeah, I guess so."

"Come on, Ashâ€|See you guys later, okay?"

"Bye!"

"Pi pikachu!"

\_'Hey, don't forget me!\_'

--

Pikachu jumped up on my shoulder. It was still wearing my hat and my PokÃ©belt.

"Hey, how could I forget about you, Pikachu? We're not gonna lose each other ever again, right?"

"Pika!"

\_'Right!\_'

--

"Seeâ€|? We're remembering each other already."

Pikachu giggled, and the three of us returned to the Team Rocket headquarters.

## 25. Forgetting

## Chapter 25

"Forgetting"

Pikachu was riding on my head. After the usual routine, the former boss let us into his office.

"Ah Ash Billie and Pikachu It's a pleasure to see you all That was rather quick, wasn't it, Ash?"

"Uh ah-heh um Yeah, I guess so."

"So, why are you here?" he asked.

There was no anger in his voice, no intimidation He just sounded as if he was enjoying talking to us I would've thought it was scary if I had been able to think about things like that

"Um We're here to get some different Pokémon for Ash," Billie said.

"Ah Which ones would you like?" he asked.

"Pidgeotto" I said.

He stared at me for a few seconds.

"Is that all?"

"Um Yes."

"Very well then. Which one will you be trading it for?" he asked.

"Uh Magnemite"

"I see Your Pikachu is much stronger than your Magnemite, isn't it?"

I nodded.

"Pikachu!"

\_'I'm stronger than anything!\_'

--

I just smiled and decided not to say anything.

The boss master whatever took Magnemite's Pokéball and went into his "storage" room. When he came back, he handed me Pidgeotto's Pokéball.

"Pidgeotto's all better, isn't it?" I asked.

"Of course. Your Pidgeotto was under the finest care available."

Persian looked up at me. There was something in its eyesâ€somethingâ€some feelingâ€â€Sadness?â€Pity?

"What are you doing here?" I asked it again.

"Ash, doesn't that Persian belong to the boss?" asked Billie.

"YeahCome on, why are you out here?"

"Siiann"

It continued to rub its head against my chest, and I couldn't do anything to stop it.

"UmIt really does like you, doesn't it, Ash?"

"UhHehheh"

"Pika \_chu\_, pikachu!"

\_'Come on, answer him! He asked you a question!'\_

--

Persian looked at Pikachu now.

"Pe-errrrrsiannPerrrrr"

"Pika?"

\_'Huh?'\_

--

"Persian, persianPersiann" It drooped its head and looked sadly at the floor.

"What's it saying, Pikachu?" I asked.

"PikaPikachu"

\_'It said that its master did something to yousomething bad'\_

--

\_'Something bad? Bad? Did he do something bad to me?\_'

--

I blinked and I couldn't remember what Pikachu had just told me.

--

"What did it say?" Billie asked.

"UmNothing"

"Piika!?"

\_ 'What!?' \_

—  
—

"Persianâ€|Persiannâ€|Perrrrrâ€|â€|Perrâ€|sianâ€| "

"Pikachuâ€| "

\_ 'You can't be seriousâ€|' \_

— —

"Persianâ€| "

"Pikachu! Pikachu?"

\_ 'But what did it do?' \_

—  
—

"Siiiannâ€|Perrrrâ€|Persiannâ€| "

"â€|Pikaâ€|?"

\_ 'â€|Reallyâ€|?' \_

— —

"Ash! Come on! Translate!"

I couldn't translate. For one thing, I only knew half of the conversation, and I wasn't sure I wanted to translate.

"â€|â€|Pikachuâ€|Pika?â€|Pikapi, pikaâ€|chu?"

\_ 'â€|â€|Ashâ€|Is this true?â€|Ash, did he reallyâ€|you know?' \_

— —

\_ Now what do I say? Yes? I don't even know what this silly mouse is talking about! \_

— —

\_ â€|Did I just call-? \_

— —

I blinked again and that was erased from my memory too.

"Persian!! Persian! Perrrrrrâ€| "

"â€|Ashâ€|I hate to break it to you, butâ€|we can't sit here in this hall forever, okay?"



"â€|You're right. Come on, let's go."

I stood up and started walking towards the exit. Billie followed after, but the Persian stayed behind. Even though I wasn't looking, I could still feel it staring forlornly after meâ€|

\* \* \*

We walked slowly to the PokÃ©mon Centerâ€|Billie was slowing us down.

"Ashâ€|what was that all about? Really? Give me a straight answer, please."

"Umâ€|It's not importantâ€|Really."

\_It can't be important. I hardly remember what it was.\_

Billie stopped for a moment before grabbing me and making me look her in the eyes.

"Okay, Ash. You are going to tell me what he did to you, and you are going to tell me now. I know he did something terrible to you. Something so terrible you don't even want to talk about it. But you know what, Ash? You are going to talk about it, and you are going to talk about it now."

She looked angry. Her gray eyes were staring fiercely into mine as if she was hoping that she could find her answer in there. I squirmed in her grasp, but I couldn't get myself loose.

"Tell me."

\_â€|How can I refuse her?\_

--

"Pikachu, pikachuâ€|"

Pikachu was muttering something to itself, but I couldn't make out what it was saying.

"Pika!"

\_ 'Taper! Come out!' \_

--

Pikachu threw Taper's PokÃ©ball onto the ground and it came out.

"Pikachu! What was that for!?" I cried.

Pikachu jumped to the ground and retrieved Taper's PokÃ©ball.

"Pikachupikaaaâ€|"

\_ 'You can't go wrong with a psychic PokÃ©monâ€|' \_

--

\_A Psychic PokÃ©monâ€|\_

--

I had a slight feeling that wasn't good, but I wasn't sure whyâ€|I couldn't question anything, anyway.

--

â€|Ash?

Billie had loosened her grip and I wriggled free.

"â€|Pikachu, why did you let Taper out?" I asked again.

"â€|Pikachuâ€|Pikaâ€|" Pikachu said matter-of-factly.

\_ 'I think Taper can get to the root of this problemâ€|'\_

--

"Drowzeeâ€|"

\_ 'Probablyâ€|'\_

--

"â€|Ash, what's going on?"

I stared at my two PokÃ©mon.

"I'm not sureâ€|"

I knew Taper was trying to get inside of my mind. I could almost feel it. My suspicions were confirmed when it went straight out and told me.

â€|â€|Ash? There's something different about youâ€|

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

--

"â€|How about, who are you talking to?" Billie suggested.

Taper stared at me in disbelief.

"Drowzeeâ€|Drowâ€|zeeâ€|"

\_ 'You're trying to hide something, Ashâ€|Something has changed about you, and you don't want anyone to find out.'\_

--

"\_Pi\_ kachu?"

\_ 'What's he trying to hide?' \_

- -

"Drowzeeâ€|"

\_ 'I'm not exactly sureâ€|' \_

- -

I blinked. Taper could read minds, soâ€|

- -

\_ Taperâ€|Okayâ€|umâ€|Fine. Something did happen to me. I-\_

- -

"I can't tell youâ€|"

- -

\_ Butâ€| \_

- -

\_ â€|I want to know tooâ€| \_

- -

Ash, are you alright?

"I'mâ€|fineâ€|"

- -

\_ â€|No, I'm notâ€| \_

- -

\_ Yes, I amâ€| \_

- -

"Actuallyâ€|Iâ€|amâ€|perfectly fine! Quit asking me!"

- -

Taper just stared at me. I think it was trying to make sense of what I had just said.

Billie and Pikachu were staring too, but we just ignored them.

- -

I think we need to find out what he did to youâ€|

"No."

--

\_Y-ye-! \_

--

"No!"

--

\_No! It's not important!\_

--

"It doesn't matterâ€|!"

--

\_I can't question the master's decisionsâ€|\_

--

"Did I just say master?"

--

Billie was about to say something, but I guess she decided not to.

â€|Yes you did.

\_â€|Huh? Did what?\_

--

I couldn't even remember what I had just been talking aboutâ€|

--

Ashâ€|you're really not in good shape. I think we should talk to the boss.

\_We can't do thatâ€|\_

--

Why not?

\_We just didâ€|\_

--

I'm sure that if we told him specifically that we knew what he has done to you, he would listen.

\_But you don't know what he did to me.\_

--

Actuallyâ€|It took a while to figure it out, but it seems that you

have a viral infectionâ€|

\_â€|A what?\_

--

You're sick.

\_Am not!\_

--

This isn't any normal virus, thoughâ€|I keep findingâ€|similarities toâ€|Porygonâ€|â€|Its like a cross between some virus and a Porygonâ€|but they've both been alteredâ€|so that it changes youâ€|

\_I don't know what in the world you're talking about.\_

--

That's why we should go back and talk to the boss.

"â€|Ash? Are you okay?" Billie asked quietly.

\_Okay? Am I okay? No. I'm not okay. I'm worse than I've ever beenâ€|Terribleâ€|You were right, Billieâ€|He did do something terrible to meâ€|\_

--

A short time later, I completely forgot the whole conversation.

## 26. Porygon

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 26

### Chapter 26

"Porygon"

Billie had asked if I was okay. I hadn't answered herâ€|verballyâ€|I had just walked awayâ€|â€|but Taper knew. Taper was the only other one who knew.

â€|Maybe it is best not to get rid of the virusâ€|â€|but I have to be careful about thisâ€|There may be someone else who can help you more than I could.

\_Who?\_

--

â€|Ashâ€|would you happen to know who created that virus?

\_No.\_

--

â€|The boss would knowâ€|

\_The Master won't tell youâ€|He's too smart for that. Besides, I'm not going to ask him.\_

--

Maybe Billie will.

\_Billie? She doesn't even know!\_

--

â€|Then I'll just have to tell herâ€|

\_Wait, don't do thatâ€|\_

I couldn't hear Taper trying to talk to Billie. I guess it could only talk to one person at a timeâ€|

I didn't look back. I just kept walking. I'm pretty sure that I was leaving them behind.

"Ash!!" I heard Billie suddenly yell.

I cringed and turned around. Billie, Taper, and Pikachu were jogging to catch up.

"Ash!â€|Is it true?"

I put on a mask of confusion.

"Is what true?"

\_Looks like Taper got through to herâ€|\_

"â€|Did he reallyâ€|â€|putâ€|somethingâ€|inâ€|you?"

"â€|Huh?"

"Did he put a virus in you?"

\_I'm not sureâ€|\_

"What gave you that idea?"

"Well, you said that you were going to obey him, sometimes it takes you a while to say anything, and plus, Taper just told me so, and I'd have to be pretty stupid not to take the word of a psychic PokÃ©mon."

"Pikapika."

\_That's right.\_

--

"Drrowzeeâ€|"

'I told you, Ash'

--

'Now look what you did! I'm going to have to come up with some good lies to cover this up'

--

Why lie? Just tell her the truth.

--

I decided to ignore it.

"Come on, Billie. He didn't put any virus into me. That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard! Ha! A virus. That's a good one, Billie."

"So it is true"

I stopped laughing.

"Huh?"

"Ash? If that isn't what he did, then what did he do? I know he punished you somehow. He punishes everyone who doesn't listen to him, but you came out with nothing to show for it. What else could he have done?"

"Ah'heh'heh'heh' Umm"

"I knew you were lying. I knew it. Ash, we are going right back to the HQ and I am going to make sure he figures out how to cure you. Understand?"

"Um'You'can't'do that"

"You wanna bet? Come on."

She grabbed my wrist and started dragging me right back the way we had come. We hadn't even gotten to the Pokemon Center yet. The others were gonna wonder what was going on'

Taper and Pikachu followed along too. Taper grinned up at me.

See, Ash? I told you everything would work out.

'Everything will work out, but not in \_your\_ favor, you little'whatever you are'

--

Drowzee. I am a Drowzee.

'Whatever.'

--

\* \* \*

Billie, still holding me by the wrist, knocked on the boss's door.

"Who is it?" he asked impatiently.

"Billie and Ash" she said darkly.

"What? Back already? This had better be important"

"Oh, it is" She said that quietly, so only the four of us could hear.

She opened the door, waited for my Pokémon to go in, shoved me inside, then closed the door behind us.

The boss stared critically at us.

"You look upset, Billie," he said.

"Yeah. I am."

She straightened up and brushed a stray hair out of her eyes.

"Any particular reason?"

"Yes I demand to know what you did to Ash, why you did it, and how we can get him back to normal."

He narrowed his eyes.

"You do not demand anything, Billie. I am the boss. I am the only one who can demand."

"Oh yeah? Well, to hell with that! I'm sick and tired of you hurting everybody! Now, what did you do to Ash!?"

He stood up.

"Billie, that kind of attitude will get you nowhere. Now shape up or I will have to shape you down."

"You can't do that" she said, gritting her teeth.

"I can do whatever I please! Now remember who is in charge here before I have to remind you myself!!"

They were both scaring me.

Billie bowed her head, but there was still anger in her voice.

"I know who is in charge. I just wish you would let us know why you are doing these things to us I have reason to believe that you have infected Ash with a genetically altered virus that is trying to program him just like a computer Is that true?"

I think that caught him off guard.

"That is none of your business. Besides, I am the one who asks



the questions here, not you!"

"Bossâ€¦please understand where I'm coming fromâ€¦Ash is my partner, and if something is different about him, don't you think that I deserve to know?"

"Pikachu, pikaâ€¦"

\_'I deserve to know, tooâ€¦'\_

--

"Drowzeeâ€¦"

\_'It only makes senseâ€¦'\_

--

\_Shut up, all of you!\_

--

The boss looked at each of us in turn. He lingered a little on me. Finally he sat down and sighed.

"Fine. I suppose you're right. You do deserve to knowâ€¦"

He stared at nothing for a moment before continuing.

"â€¦I did do exactly what you said I didâ€¦Ash is, in fact, a living robotâ€¦I tell him to do something, he does it. It's as simple as that. There is nothing personal involved. No doubts, no second thoughtsâ€¦â€¦Almost too good to be trueâ€¦" He sighed and smiled sadly.

I kept a straight faceâ€¦Billie didn't.

"â€¦Why did you do that?" she asked softly.

"Because I had no choice! He left me with none. It was either that, or run the risk of him trying to pull off another stunt like that again. I can't have team members running off whenever they feel like it. If one person tries it, who knows how long it will be before someone else tries the exact same stunt? It just won't doâ€¦This was the most reliable solution to that problem."

"But you \_hurt\_ him!"

"â€¦That's his own fault. He shouldn't have run off in the first place."

"You shouldn't have done that to him! You justâ€¦Youâ€¦"

"I, what?"

"You'reâ€¦"

She lowered her head and muttered softly.

"â€¦evilâ€¦"

I don't know whether he heard her or not. He didn't react.

"â€|Well, now you know, so there's no point in staying here. Go to the Indigo Plateau and defeat the Elite Fourâ€|Do you hear me, Ash?"

"Yes."

"â€|And are you going to do that?"

"â€|Yeah."

"â€|That's good."

He smiled at Billie. "See? Isn't he much easier to handle this way?"

She didn't smile back.

"â€|You may go nowâ€|â€|.â€|Oh yeahâ€|I almost forgotâ€|Don't let your Pikachu shock youâ€|With that newâ€|installmentâ€|an electric shock could beâ€|veryâ€|umâ€|Well, you just don't want it to happen, okay?"

Billie stared at him with wide eyes. She was either excited or horrified. I couldn't tell.

"What would happen if he was shocked?"

"Oh, umâ€|That would cause the program to malfunction, resulting inâ€|something similar toâ€|self-destructionâ€|I'm sure you wouldn't want that, would you?"

I shook my head sincerely.

"Noâ€|That wouldn't be goodâ€|" Billie said.

"I thought so. Well, you'd better get goingâ€|"

We saluted and promptly leftâ€|I was a little nervous, thoughâ€|

## 27. Mission Impossible

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 27

### Chapter 27

"Mission Impossible"

--

Billie was quiet after our meeting with the boss. She wasn't silentâ€|she was just quiet.

"â€|So it's really trueâ€|"

"â€|Yeah."

"â€|â€|I'm sorry."

"â€|Why?"

"â€|Becauseâ€|â€|Ashâ€|It's just not rightâ€|People shouldn't do thatâ€|to peopleâ€|"

I looked at her differentlyâ€|She looked very upsetâ€|very sadâ€|I almost felt sorry for her.

"Pika!"

\_'Look! '\_

--

I looked where Pikachu was pointing. A little ways down the hall, the Persian was standing thereâ€|waiting for us.

"â€|Persian?" I asked.

"Perrrrrâ€|" it rumbled in reply.

"Pikachu! Pika?"

\_'Persian! What are you doing here? '\_

--

"Perrrrrrsiiiaanâ€|"

--

â€|I was waiting for you.

I jumped and glanced down at Taper, who smiled wryly at me.

What? You don't want me to translate?

"Umâ€|"

"â€|Why were you waiting for us, Persian?" Billie asked.

Persian looked at her funnily. Then it smiled and nodded.

"Perrrrrsianâ€|â€|Pe-errrrrsiaanâ€|"

\_'I was waiting for Ashâ€|I think I can help himâ€| '\_

--

"Help me? How?â€|Why?"

Persian looked up at me.

"Pe-errrrsianâ€|â€|Pe-errrrrâ€|"

\_'Because you need helpâ€|â€|and I know who can help youâ€| '\_

--

"Pikachu?"

\_'I thought you said \_you\_ could help him? '\_

--

"Perrrsianâ€|Perrrsianâ€| "

\_'I canâ€|by taking him to the man who created his sicknessâ€| '\_

--

"Sickness?" I said.

"Perrrsianâ€|Perrrrr."

\_'You have an infection. That makes you sick.' \_

--

"I am not sick!"

"Heeâ€|Umâ€|Persian's got a point there, Ashâ€|I meanâ€|Viruses make people sick, don't they?"

"I am \_not\_ sick!!"

"Persianperâ€|Perrrrrsianâ€| "

\_'Follow me. We have to get there before Master realizes what I've doneâ€| '\_

--

\_Its master is my master tooâ€|\_ I realized.

--

With that, Persian turned on its heels and bounded away.

"Pikapi!!"

\_'Hey! Wait up!!!' \_

--

"That Persian's gonna get in a lot of troubleâ€| " I muttered.

"Not if this works out and I can help it," Billie grinned, "Come on! We're gonna cure you!"

"What if I don't want to be cured!?" I protested as Billie started dragging me away again.

"Trust me. You do."

\_When the master finds out about this everyone will be in a lot of troubleâ€|\_

- -

\* \* \*

"Should we get the others, Persian?" Billie asked.

"Per?"

\_ 'What others?' \_

- -

"Umâ€|Ash's friendsâ€|uhâ€|Should we get them?"

Persian thought about that.

"Perrrsianâ€|Per."

\_ 'Maybe later. We have to hurry!' \_

- -

"Ohâ€|Right."

\_That's right. Hurry. Hurry and get there, so I can call up our master.\_

- -

We kept runningâ€|We must have looked silly, what with three PokÃ©mon leading the way and a girl dragging some kid along behind herâ€|

It took a while to reach the guy's house. It was way on the outskirts of town, so far out actually, that I'm not sure if it was even part of the city.

Persian slowed to a stop and waited for the rest of us to catch up.

"â€|Perrrsianâ€|Perrrrâ€|Persianâ€|Sian!"

\_ 'â€|This is the placeâ€|Just go up and knock on the door. When he answers it, tell him your problem and he'll probably help you fix itâ€|I have to go back nowâ€|â€|Goodbye!' \_

- -

Before any of us could say anything, it had leapt off and was running with all the speed and grace that its kind was gifted with.

"â€|I guess we should go knockâ€|" Billie said nervously.

"Yeah. If you really want to. We could always turn back, y'know."

She glared at me. "Well, you've just made up my mind. Come on. We're goin' in."

The three of them walked up to the door, and Billie was dragging me along, as usual. Since there was a doorbell, she rang that.

He's coming, Taper informed us.

"Oh goody," I muttered.

"Shut up," Billie said.

In a little while, the door opened, and we were faced with a man with long, gray hair, a lab coat, small glasses—the works. A typical scientist.

He adjusted his glasses with one hand and peered at us.

"And—what do you want?" he asked.

"Um—Sir—" Billie began, "A while ago, you gave a—virus—to a man—Did you know that he is the head of Team Rocket?"

"Huh—? \_Oh\_, you mean \_that\_ man—Um—Yes—I did know that—"

"Um—Did you happen to know—by any chance—what he wanted to do with that virus?" she asked.

"Uh—What virus are you talking about?" he asked, adjusting his glasses again.

"The one to make a biological robot," Billie almost whispered.

He stepped back in surprise.

"How—? Uh—He glanced around, suddenly nervous. "Maybe you'd better come inside—and—we can discuss this—in private—"

"Yeah, I thought that would be a good idea," Billie said.

He let us in. He looked strangely at Pikachu as it was coming in. I could see why. It was still wearing my stuff. After glancing around outside, he closed the door swiftly.

He paused a moment before speaking.

"How did you find out about this?" he whispered, even though we were in private now,

Billie patted me on the shoulder.

"You see this kid here?" she asked, "He's got your little virus swimming around inside him right this second."

The scientist had been right in the middle of adjusting his glasses, but when he heard her say that, they fell off his nose and into his hands. He hastily shoved them back on, crooked.

"\_What did you say\_!?" he gasped.

"I said what I said. Ash here is a 'biological robot'."

He straightened his glasses out then grabbed me by the shoulders.

"Is this true?" he asked me.

"Uhhâ€|â€|Yeahâ€|?" I said.

He let go and I stumbled backwards. He fiddled with the corner of his glasses rapidly.

"That can't be! I told him not to use it on anyone! I told him discreetly that it was only a prototype, and it was not to be used on anybody, let alone a humanâ€|Especially a little boy like yourselfâ€|"

"Little!?" I exclaimed.

Billie laughed nervously.

He looked down and started tapping his foot.

"This is just terrible. The only reason I gave it to him in the first place was because he forced me toâ€|I didn't \_want\_ to give it to anyone until I had concocted an antidoteâ€|"

Billie stared at him.

"â€|You mean you can't help us?"

He stopped fidgeting and looked up. His eyes were sad.

"No. I'm sorryâ€|If only I had known that he was going to use it so soonâ€|I would have worked fasterâ€|butâ€|as it is nowâ€|â€|there isn't any cure."

\_That's goodâ€|\_

--

"Butâ€|but there has to be a cure!" Billie protested.

The scientist shook his head. "I'm sorry, young lady, but I already told you--"

"No! You don't understand! There \_has \_to be a cure, because you were the one who created it, and you have to be able to destroy it!"

"I'm sorryâ€|I really amâ€|â€|The only hope I can offer you is that I'll try to come up with a cure as soon as possibleâ€|â€|Howeverâ€|that could take anything from a couple of daysâ€|toâ€|a couple of yearsâ€|â€|"

"\_Years\_!!?"

"Piika!!?"

\_ 'What!!?' \_

--

He tapped the points of his index fingers together.

"Hopefully, it won't take \_that\_ longâ€|â€|"

"You'd better hope so!!" Billie replied.

\_I knew things would go my wayâ€|Nowâ€|to get back to the bossâ€|\_

â€|Something way back in the back of my mind was desperately disagreeing with meâ€|but it was easily snuffed outâ€|

## 28. Big Mistakes

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 29

### Chapter 28

#### "Big Mistakes"

Dr. Gray, that's the scientist, got to work right away. He went into his lab and asked us not to bother him unless he asked us to. That left the rest of us with nothing to doâ€|Wellâ€|most of us, at least. I had to figure out a way to get to the phone without them noticingâ€|

"â€|I hope he hurries upâ€|" Billie commented, after he had disappeared.

I couldn't care less. Even if it did only take a few days, I wouldn't let him get near me. I knew the boss wouldn't like that, and I had to do what the boss wanted.

"â€|What about you, Ash?" Billie asked me.

"Huh?"

"Don't you want him to hurry up?"

"No."

She kind of looked at me for a moment, then sighed. "I knew you would say thatâ€|"

I crossed my arms. "Why do you want him toâ€|'cure' me, anyway? I thought you liked staying on the boss's good side."

Right away, I knew I had hit her where it hurt. She refused to look me in the eye, but she kept on talking.

"â€|Ashâ€|I thought it was for the bestâ€|I didâ€|at the timeâ€|but nowâ€|Now I see that I should've known betterâ€|I meanâ€|the only reason you're back here anyway is because I brought you hereâ€|Kind ofâ€|â€|If I had left when you told me to, and done what you saidâ€|none of this would've happenedâ€|I have to make it up to you



somehow, Ashâ€| "

I smiled. "Then do me this favorâ€|â€|Don't."

That hurt her even more. I could tellâ€|andâ€|I didn't care.

"I'll see you around," I said casually.

With that I left her alone with Pikachu andâ€|Taperâ€|They both stared at me critically as I walked out the door, but I ignored them. None of them were important.

I didn't know where Dr. Gray kept his phone, so I figured I was going to have to search his whole house.

# Maybe it would be easier to just go back to the HQâ€|

--

â€|I know what you're trying to doâ€|

I jumped and spun around. Taper was standing right next to the door. Drowzees are really just small, chubby thingsâ€|but they're psychic powers make them dangerousâ€|and that one was scaring me.

â€|Don't try it, Ashâ€|I won't let you.

"Why not?" I whispered angrily.

Because I have a duty to protect you. I can't let you hurt yourself any more.

"I can do whatever I want. You can't stop me."

Really? The phone's in the room right behind you. I'll bet you anything that you can't call the boss.

I grinned.

"Sorry, Taper, but you're gonna lose this betâ€|Thanks for telling me where the phone is, though."

I turned around, opened the door, then shut it behind me. Sure enough, there was a phone sitting on a table. I took a step forward, but the door behind me suddenly swung open as if a Machoke had punched it open. I glanced behind me in surprise, and there was Taper again.

Don't do it, Ash.

"Shut up, you stupid PokÃ©mon," I growled.

Taper didn't move.

I know you don't mean that.

"You don't know anything. You think that just because you're psychic that that makes you smart. Well it doesn't, and you can't stop me from making this call."

I reached out my hand to pick up the phone. I got about five inches away from it, then I couldn't move my hand anymore.

"What the?"

I tried shaking it, but it was frozen in place. I grabbed my arm with my other hand and tried to get it to move, but it still didn't budge.

\_â€|Taper.\_

--

I glared at my PokÃ©mon.

"You're gonna pay for this, Taperâ€|"

It didn't say anythingâ€|I didn't like the way its eyes were glowing a light blueâ€|

Then I realized that my other hand wasn't frozen. I reached for the phone as fast as I could, but I only got about two inches away before it got frozen too.

--

"Taper! What are you doing!?" I asked it in frustration.

Disable attack, it said simply.

"Well, un-Disable me! I don't like this!"

Not until I'm sure that you won't try to call the boss again.

"I'm not going to! Now stop it!"

You're lying.

"No, I'm not!"

Because I could think of any other ideas, I tried to kick the phone off of the hook, but Taper just froze my leg too, and I ended up falling on the floorâ€|and it wasn't carpeted eitherâ€|

While I trying to recover from the fall, which wasn't easy, because I was paralyzed, the blue in Taper's eyes gradually faded away, and I could move a little again.

"Pikapi!"

# 'Hey! What's going on!?'

--

Still lying on the ground, I turned my head to see Pikachu running up next to Taper. It was obviously concerned about me, but Taper got busy telling it that I was alright.

# It's still got all my PokÃ©ballsâ€|

--

I focused on the single Pokéball with the yellow star on it.

# I am home free!

--

Being careful not to think about, lest Taper find out, I got into a ready position, then lunged at Pikachu.

"\_Drowzee\_!!"

\_'\_No\_!!'\_

--

I know I caught Pikachu by surprise. How could I tell? Because it reacted by pure instinct and the natural reflex of an electric mouse when it's being attacked is to Thundershock the attacker! That's how I could tell!

I don't know if I got Taper's Pokéball or not! I guess it doesn't really matter anymore!

What I \_do\_ know is that that Thundershock was different from any other Thundershock I'd ever experienced and I had experienced a lot! That Thundershock did more than just electrocute or even burn me. I think I felt something explode inside of my head! I'm not really sure! It wasn't a very large explosion! a small one! an explosion inside of me! burning! sizzling! hurting! very painful! very! very painful! very!

\* \*  
\*

Darkness! Heat! Darkness! Chill! Dark! Dark! everywhere! Abyss! Darkness! Darness!

I had lost all sense of identity. Names were meaningless to me. All I knew was the darkness and the temperatures that came and went! I was alone! but that didn't matter to me. I didn't know what it meant to not be alone. All I had ever known was the darkness. The darkness that surrounded me! that was a part of me! I didn't think anything else would ever break the darkness! but something did! something I had never seen before! a light! a small light! meaningless! pale! distant! flickering!

Light!

What was this new thing? What was its significance? Why had it come? What did it want with me? Why was it killing the darkness?

!light!

!another one!

!Why?

Now that there were two, I could learn something new about themâ€¦something I knew was called colorâ€¦whiteâ€¦pinkâ€¦changing colorsâ€¦blueâ€¦yellowâ€¦They were never the same color at the same timeâ€¦They moved back and forthâ€¦up and downâ€¦aroundâ€¦aroundâ€¦aroundâ€¦I watched them in wonderâ€¦

â€¦Dancingâ€¦

The lights were dancingâ€¦Could I dance with themâ€¦? What was I anyway?

I looked around to try to figure out if I was a light too, but I couldn't see myself in the darkness.

--

\_Can I dance too? Can you tell me what I am? Can you help me? Can you hear meâ€¦?\_

--

The lights kept on dancingâ€¦back and forthâ€¦to and froâ€¦up and downâ€¦around and aroundâ€¦and aroundâ€¦â€¦andâ€¦aroundâ€¦â€¦

# Maybe I can't dance. Maybe I can just watch. Maybe I am just part of the darknessâ€¦

â€¦the darknessâ€¦The darkness that was a part of meâ€¦

â€¦That was when I knew. I was just part of the backgroundâ€¦the darkness that was everywhereâ€¦The lights were separateâ€¦They were specialâ€¦They were dancingâ€¦â€¦dancingâ€¦â€¦

â€¦I just watchedâ€¦I watched as they danced more and moreâ€¦The silent music that they were dancing to grew fasterâ€¦and fasterâ€¦They danced more vividly, and they're colors changed more rapidly, and the glowed brighter and brighterâ€¦They grew larger and largerâ€¦They started to fill up the darkness. They grewâ€¦and they glowedâ€¦and they grewâ€¦and they glowedâ€¦and they \_burned\_â€¦They glowed and burned and glowed and \_burned\_â€¦and burnedâ€¦and grewâ€¦andâ€¦â€¦

## 29. Things

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 29

# Chapter 29

"Things"

I couldn't take it anymore. All of the heat, and the light, and the growing, andâ€¦all of itâ€¦I couldn't stand it.

\_â€¦\_

"â€¦Pika?"

"Drowâ€| zee? "

"Pikapikaâ€| chuâ€| "

"Drowzeeâ€| "

What was that? A noiseâ€|? Somethingâ€|what were they calledâ€|voices?

"Pikapi!! "

The darkness and the light disappearedâ€|There was lightâ€|but there was something different about itâ€|â€|There was also a noiseâ€|â€|beepingâ€|â€|It didn't stopâ€|

\_â€|Am I aliveâ€|?\_

--

"Drowzee! "

The light was blindingâ€|I had toâ€|squint my eyes to block itâ€|

\_â€|eyesâ€|? I must be aliveâ€|!\_

--

I moved my eyes around. Everything was white. It wasn't as nice to look at as the darkness and the dancing lightsâ€|

"Pikachuâ€|? "

\_What is that noiseâ€|?\_

--

I turned my head to seeâ€|Something yellowâ€|It was alive tooâ€|

"Pikaâ€| "

That was what was making the noiseâ€|

"Drrowzee? "

Something else was making a different noiseâ€|I looked just to the side of the yellow thing, and I saw another yellow thingâ€|It was bigger than the first yellow thing.

"Pika! "

\_Why do they keep making noisesâ€|?\_

--

"â€|â€|Pikachu? "

"â€|Drowzeeâ€|Drâ€|owzeeâ€| "

"Pikaâ€| "

The big yellow thing left, and the little yellow thing stayed. It got closer to me. I could hear it breathingâ€|

"Pikapiâ€|?"

I didn't know what to doâ€|I don't think I could've done anything anywayâ€|

"Pikaâ€|â€|chuâ€| "

A little time passed, and suddenly the white place was filled with more thingsâ€|largerâ€| more colorfulâ€|They made more noisesâ€|Their noises were louder tooâ€|I didn't like those thingsâ€|â€|They scared meâ€|

"Drowzee! Drowwzee!"

That one noise rose above the rest. Everything else quieted down.

I looked for the big yellow thing, but I couldn't see it.

"Drowzeedrow!"

The big colorful things made quieter noises, then they each came up to me and made noises at me. I wanted to make them stop, but I didn't know howâ€|

â€|After what I thought was a long time, all of the big colorful things left except for one. After making lots of noises at me, it got quieted and started touching me with cold things. I didn't like that, but I don't think it was trying to hurt me, so I let it go ahead. Finally, it stopped, made some more noises, waited a little while, then left.

"â€|Pikaâ€| "

The little yellow thing popped up beside me again.

"Pikachu, pika?"

I stared at it, and it stared back.

\_What is it trying to do?\_

--

"â€|Pi?â€|â€|Pikapiâ€|?"

I decided to try something.

"â€|Pikaâ€| " I said.

â€|It wasn't easy to say that. My mouth was dry, and I wasn't sure what I was doing anyway.

The little yellow thing straightened up.

"Pikachu!?" it said.

I took a deep breath and tried again.

"Pikaâ€|chu."

The little yellow thing blinked and talked to me.

"Pikapikaâ€|?"

\_This isn't so badâ€|\_

--

"Pika pika," I repeated.

The little yellow thing looked over its shoulder and the big yellow thing appeared.

"Pikapikachu?!" it said to the big yellow thing.

"Drowzeeâ€|"

\_Something newâ€|\_

--

"â€|Drowzee," I said.

We kept going back and forth like that. It took me a while to figure out that those noises could actually mean things. After that, the two of them started teaching me things. They told me their names, and they told me mine too. They taught me about me, and the other humans, and about PokÃ©mon, and about lots of things. I couldn't remember everything, but they also told me what the most important things wereâ€|

â€|I didn't learn that all in one dayâ€|It took a whileâ€|Every day, the humans would come in, make noises, then leaveâ€|After a day or two, a Persian started coming every day tooâ€|It helped Pikachu and Taper teach me.

One day, the doctor came in and said that I could leaveâ€|I didn't understand him, but Taper translated for me.

Taper, Pikachu, and the other humans helped me get outside and into another building. Persian was already there.

"Drowzeeâ€|Drowzeeâ€|drowâ€|"

\_This is Dr. Gray's houseâ€|We'll stay here until you can remember everything for yourselfâ€|'\_

--

"Pikachuâ€|?" I asked.

\_ 'What about after thatâ€|? '\_

- -

"Pika pikaâ€| "

\_ 'We don't knowâ€| '\_

- -

They all seemed sad about something, and I wanted to ask them about it, but the humans wouldn't let me. They took me to some strange human who looked similar to the doctorâ€|

"Drowzee?" I asked.

\_ 'Who is this?' \_

- -

"Drowwzeeâ€| "

\_ 'This is Dr. Grayâ€| '\_

- -

I didn't like Dr. Grayâ€|

He nodded his head and smiled at me. He started making sounds, but I still couldn't understand what he was saying.

"â€|Drowzee?"

\_ 'â€|What's going on?' \_

- -

"Perrrrrsianâ€|Perrrâ€| "

\_ 'He's saying helloâ€|He hasn't seen you for a whileâ€| '\_

- -

"Sian?"

\_ 'Why does that matter?' \_

- -

"Perrrrrrrsianâ€|Persian per. Siiiannâ€| "

\_ 'It doesn't reallyâ€|Humans just do that. It's politeâ€| '\_

- -

"Drowzee drowâ€| "

\_ 'You're supposed to say something to himâ€| '\_



--

"Pika?"

\_'What?\_'

--

"Pikachu."

\_'Just say hello.'\_

--

I looked up at him. He was staring at me and his mouth was open.

"Pikachu," I said.

\_'Hello.'\_

--

Everything was too quiet. I really didn't like it. They were all staring at meI didn't like that at all

Dr. Gray started making lots and lots of noises all of a sudden. He was really scaring me.

"Siiiaaannn!" I cried.

\_'Help me!\_'

--

"Persian!!"

Persian jumped on top off Dr. Gray and almost knocked him over.

"Siian, perrr!"

\_'Now's your chance!\_'

--

Taper stared at me for a moment, then smiled.

"Drowzee, drowDrowzee"

\_'Just come over here, AshThey'll get the picture!\_'

--

I tried to hide behind Taper. It wasn't easy, because it was smaller than I was.

"Pikachu?" Pikachu asked.

\_ 'Why are you hiding?' \_

- -

"Pikapika chu," I said.

\_ 'That guy was scaring me.' \_

- -

"Chaâ€| "

\_ 'Ohâ€| ' \_

- -

"Drowzee drowzee!" Taper said.

\_ 'Persian, I think that's enough!' \_

- -

A little reluctantly, Persian let Dr. Gray go and walked over to us.  
It sat down and smiled at the humans.

They all started talking at once. I didn't like that.

Persian looked up at me and smiled.

"Perrrsianâ€| "

\_ 'Come this wayâ€| ' \_

- -

We followed Persian into another room. Taper closed the door behind us.

"Pikaâ€| zeeâ€| Persian?" I asked.

\_ 'What were they all doing back there?' \_

- -

"Persiianâ€| Persianâ€| "

\_ 'They were just being humansâ€| Ignore themâ€| ' \_

- -

"Pikachu?" Pikachu asked.

\_ 'You don't like them?' \_

- -

"Chuâ€| "

\_ 'They're scary.' \_

--

"â€|Drowwzeeâ€|Drowzee."

\_'â€|You should probably learn the human languageâ€|Then you'd be able to understand each other.'\_

--

"Pikadrow! Chu persianâ€|"

\_'But I don't want to! They're too scaryâ€|'\_

--

"Pikachuuâ€|"

\_'But Ash, you're one of themâ€|'\_

--

I bit my lip. I knew Pikachu was right, but I didn't want to admit itâ€|

"Pikachuuâ€|â€|Perrrsianâ€|"

\_'Well, even if we look alikeâ€|â€|I still think they're scaryâ€|'\_

--

"Drowwzeeeeâ€|â€|"

\_'You'll get used to them, Ashâ€|â€|'\_

--

I didn't want to believe them, but I knew that I wouldâ€|Besides, that was them knocking on the door right thenâ€|

### 30. New

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 30

Chapter 30

"New"

I still didn't like the humansâ€|I could understand a few of their words, and they always got excited when I proved itâ€|but I still didn't like themâ€|â€|They tried to teach me, like the PokÃ©mon hadâ€|but it just wasn't the sameâ€|The humans used too many different soundsâ€|I couldn't keep track of all of themâ€|I preferred to let the PokÃ©mon do all the translating for me.

\* \* \*

The human called Misty was talking to me. When she was done, I looked at Pikachu for the translation. It sighed and translated.

"Pikachu pikapikachu."

\_'She wants to know if you're ever going to talk to them.'\_

--

I thought about it and replied.

"Pikachuâ€|Pikachuâ€|Pika."

\_'I'll talk to them when I can understand them.'\_

--

"Drowzee drowzeeâ€|"

\_'But you can understand them. We're helping youâ€|'\_

--

"Chuâ€|â€|Drowâ€|zeeâ€|â€|Persian."

\_'Rightâ€|â€|Butâ€|I don't want to talk to themâ€|their way.'\_

--

Taper looked at Misty and I knew it was talking to her mindâ€|When they were done, she looked at me sadly and said somethingâ€|I recognized my name in there, but that was all.

She says that she wishes you would think more about what you're sayingâ€|She thinks you could talk to them if you'd give them a chance.

â€|I guess Taper was getting tired of talking out loud.

"Drowzeeâ€|"

\_'I'll give them a chance when I want toâ€|'\_

--

â€|I think they were all getting tired of my stubbornnessâ€|

"Pikachuâ€|pikaâ€|"

\_'Ash, you should talk to themâ€|They're your friendsâ€|'\_

--

"â€|â€|Pikachuâ€|â€|Pikaâ€|chuâ€|"

\_'â€|â€|They may have been my friends beforeâ€|â€|but I don't know them anymoreâ€|so I don't know why I should trust themâ€|'\_

--

"Pikachu!"

\_'I trust them! '\_

--

"Pikachuâ€|"

\_'Well, I don'tâ€| '\_

--

Pikachu sighed and looked away. Right then, I heard a loud noise and I almost jumped out of my chair.

"Kachu?" I asked.

\_'What was that? '\_

--

Pikachu smiled lopsidedly.

"Pikapikachuâ€|" it said.

\_'That was the doorbell, sillyâ€| '\_

--

"Chuâ€|"

\_'Ohâ€| '\_

--

Taper looked alarmed.

I wouldn't answer thatâ€|

"Pikachu?" I said.

\_'Why not? '\_

--

From the other room, I heard the door click open.

"Drowzeeâ€|" Taper sighed.

\_'I guess you'll just have to seeâ€| '\_

--

I heard Billie making lots of loud noises, then I heard some unfamiliar voices. After that, I heard Brock and Richie start making noises too. They were all yelling at each otherâ€|They did that a lotâ€|

"P-errrsian!!" Persian exclaimed, pushing the door open and shutting it behind it.

\_'It's Team Rocket!!!'\_

--

I was confused. They hadn't told me about that before.

"Perrrsian?" I asked.

\_'What's Team Rocket?'\_

--

I know Persian heard me, but it decided not to answer me.

"Perrrsianâ€|Per?"

\_'They probably want Ash backâ€|What do we do?'\_

--

"Drowzeeâ€|" Taper said.

\_'I don't knowâ€|'\_

--

"Pikachu!" Pikachu declared, "Pikapi, pikachu!"

\_'Tell them to leave!â€|Ash isn't ready to go yet!'\_

--

"â€|Pika?" I asked.

\_'â€|Go where?'\_

--

Misty stood up and went into the other room, leaving us behindâ€|Everyone was ignoring meâ€|

"Drowzeeâ€|Drrowâ€|"

\_'Pikachu's rightâ€|They can't take Ash. He's not ready.'\_

--

"Pikachu!" I demanded.

\_'Not ready for what!?'\_

--

"Perrrsiiiannâ€|" Persian said.

\_'They're not gonna leave that easily, thoughâ€|'\_

— —

"Pika!?" I said.

\_ 'Who!?' \_

— —

They all looked worriedâ€¦I wished that they would tell me what was going onâ€¦

"Pikachu, pikaâ€¦"

\_ 'Maybe we should let Ash talk to themâ€¦' \_

— —

"Pii!?"

\_ 'What!?' \_

— —

"Drowwzee?"

\_ 'What good will that do?' \_

— —

"Pikachuâ€¦Pikapikaâ€¦chuâ€¦"

\_ 'If they see him like he is nowâ€¦maybe they'll leave us aloneâ€¦Maybeâ€¦' \_

— —

"â€¦Drowwzeeâ€¦"

\_ 'â€¦It's not much, but it's the best we have right nowâ€¦' \_

— —

"Pikapi chu!!!?"

\_ 'What are you guys talking about!!!?' \_

— —

Persian looked at me sadly.

"â€¦Persianâ€¦Pe-errrâ€¦"

\_ 'It's probably not gonna workâ€¦but it's worth a tryâ€¦' \_

— —

Pikachu nodded.

"Pikapiâ€¦Kachuâ€¦"

\_ 'Okay, Ashâ€|Follow usâ€| '\_

- -

"Kachu, pika?" I asked.

\_ 'What are we doing?' \_

- -

"Pikapi, kachuâ€| "

\_ 'You're gonna meet Team Rocketâ€| '\_

- -

Pikachu pulled the door open with a little help from me, and as soon as the humans saw me, they quieted down and stared. I stared back.

There were two new humans. They were somewhat the same colors, but one's hair was really big, and the other one's wasn't. They also had what must have been a PokÃ©mon, with them. It was the same color as Persian, but it was a lot smaller, about the size of Pikachu.

The one with big hair stepped forward and smiled. It started talking to me, and I recognized my name.

"â€|Pikachuâ€| " I whispered.

\_ 'â€|How do they know me?â€| '\_

- -

"â€|Pikaaâ€| " Pikachu said.

\_ 'â€|They've known you for a long timeâ€| '\_

- -

The PokÃ©mon said something in the human language, and they talked to each other for a short time. Then Misty started talking to them. She was angry.

When she was done, the new PokÃ©mon stepped forward, cleared its throat and started speaking in PokÃ©mon.

"Meeowthâ€|Meowthâ€|Meow?"

\_ 'Hello there, Ashâ€|This girl just told me you only talk to PokÃ©monâ€|Is this true?' \_

- -

I blinked at it, trying to figure out what that was supposed to mean.

"â€|â€|Meowth?" I said experimentally.



\_ 'â€|â€|You're Meowth?' \_

It looked surprised.

"Meeâ€|â€|Meowthâ€| "

\_ 'Uhhâ€|â€|Yeah. Of courseâ€|' \_

- -

I nodded.

"â€|Meowthâ€| " I said.

\_ 'â€|Well, it's trueâ€|' \_

- -

"\_Mee\_ owth?

\_ 'What's true?' \_

- -

"â€|â€|Pikachu, pikachuâ€| "

\_ 'â€|â€|I only talk to PokÃ©monâ€|' \_

- -

It still looked surprised, but it turned around and talked to the humans in the human language. When it was done, it faced me again.

"Meeâ€|owthâ€|â€|Meowth?"

\_ 'Sayâ€|Ashâ€|We were wondering if you'd come back with usâ€|â€|Will you?' \_

- -

"Pikachu, pikaa!" Pikachu said.

\_ 'Ash is never going back after what you did to him!' \_

- -

"Pikachu?" I said.

\_ 'What'd they do to me?' \_

- -

â€|Pikachu didn't look up at meâ€|and it didn't answer me eitherâ€|

"Meeowth!! Memeowth! Meeeowthâ€|!"

\_ 'Ha! There you go! He doesn't even know if we really did anything or not! You can't make him stay here! He should probably just

leaveâ€|!'\_\_

--

Persian stepped out from behind me and stood in front of Meowth.

"Perrrrrrsiannnâ€|Persiiaanâ€|"

\_'As a PokÃ©mon with authority over all of you, I order you to leave right this instantâ€|Failure to do so will result in severe punishment.'\_\_

--

Meowth looked shocked once again. After a long moment, it finally muttered something in human, motioned to the new humans to leave, and then they did.

It was quiet for a moment afterwards, but Taper finally broke it.

"Drowzeeâ€|?"

\_'Was that really necessaryâ€|?'\_\_

--

Persian turned around and walked towards the bedrooms.

"Persiannâ€|Persianâ€|"

\_'I don't know if that was smart or notâ€|but we'll soon seeâ€|'\_\_

--

Without another word, it slipped through the door and disappeared inside.

"â€|Pikachuâ€|" Pikachu said.

\_'I think we'd better leave it aloneâ€|'\_\_

--

"â€|Drowzeeâ€|" Taper agreed.

\_'â€|Probablyâ€|'\_\_

--

â€|At the time, I had no idea how important that meeting was, or even who were the new people who were involvedâ€|but something big was going to happenâ€|and everything was going to changeâ€|

## 31. Destiny

## Chapter 31

"Destiny"

"Pikachu," suggested Pikachu.

\_'Let's go for a walk.'\_

--

"â€|Pika," I shrugged.

\_'â€|Why not.'\_

--

"Persian, persian, perâ€|?" Persian added with a grin.

\_'Yeah, when was the last time you got a little fresh air, Ashâ€|?'\_

--

They took me outside. It had been a few days since the Team Rockets had come. I guess they decided not to worry about them anymoreâ€|Persian had started leaving less often and even spent a few nights overâ€|I think they took me outside because they didn't want me to stay inside and just try to avoid the humansâ€|I could understand them a little more now, and I could even speak a little of their language, but I still preferred the PokÃ©mon over the humans.

It was nice outside, I guess. There was a small breeze, and it wasn't very cloudy. The PokÃ©mon were enjoying it at leastâ€|I was too busy looking around to pay attention to them. I had only been out here once before, and that was just coming from the hospitalâ€|The sky was very brightâ€|very blueâ€|and there was a little gray, but not much. Across the yard was a thin forest. Something strange was in itâ€|Before I could tell the PokÃ©mon, the strange things jumped out.

"Pika pi ka!!" Pikachu shouted in alarm.

\_'Team Rocket!!'\_

--

The two humans started saying stuff that was hard to understand, but the Meowth stopped them. It yelled at them then it turned to us.

"Ash is coming with us!" it said.

I blinked in confusion.

"Pikachu!" Pikachu replied.

\_'No he's not!'\_

--

"We have ----- the ----!" Meowth said.

Persian stepped forward.

"Persiannâ€|Persiannâ€|"

\_'Well, I won't let you take himâ€|'\_

--

Meowth sneered.

"The ---- has ----- you, Persi. Now, you're just a  
-----."

"Pikapi?" I asked.

\_'What's that mean?'\_

--

"â€|Pikaaaâ€|"

\_'â€|Means Persian's not on Team Rocket anymoreâ€|'\_

--

That confused me even more.

"Pikachuâ€|Pika?"

\_'But I thought those guys were Team Rocketâ€|not Persian?'\_

--

Pikachu didn't answer me.

Persian growled at  
Meowth.

"â€|Perrrrrsiannnâ€|Persianâ€|Perrrrrâ€|"

\_'â€|Master would never do thatâ€|Master is my friendâ€|Not  
youâ€|'\_

--

"â€|Pikachuâ€|?" I asked.

\_'â€|What are they talking aboutâ€|?'\_

--

Pikachu just shook its head.

"The ----- wants to see you tooâ€|" Meowth told Persian, "He says  
you two have a lot to talk aboutâ€|"

Persian growled. I saw its claws slip out and it started scratching the ground.

"Perrrrrrsiannâ€|Perrrâ€| "

\_'Be careful what you wish for Meowthâ€|I might have to get revengeâ€|'\_

--

"Meowth!" the human with the big hair said, "Hurry up! We don't have all day!"

Meowth growled at Persian.

"You're just -----, ----- I'm ----- the top cat again!"

Persian couldn't take it anymore. It jumped onto Meowth, scratching and biting furiously.

"Meowth!" the two humans gasped.

They each took out two PokÃ©balls and threw them. Four PokÃ©mon appeared. I listened to what they said to figure out their names.

"Arrbok!"

"We-eezing!"

"Lickii!"

"TREEEE!!!!"

These PokÃ©mon did not look friendly.

"Piâ€|Pikachu?" I asked.

\_'Uhâ€|What are they doing?'\_

--

Instead of answering, Pikachu took off its belt, held it in its paws, and then whipped it across the ground. As it hit, the PokÃ©balls on it opened up and unleashed four more PokÃ©mon.

"Bulbasauurrr!"

"S-quirtle!"

"Pidgeotto!"

"Sssandslash!"

Pikachu coiled the belt and took off its hat. Then it handed them to me.

"Pika."

\_ 'Here.' \_

- -

"Piâ€|kachuâ€|"

\_ 'Umâ€|Okayâ€|' \_

- -

I had no idea what was going on, so I decided to let everyone else work it out.

Meowth finally broke free of Persian's wrath and stood exhausted next to the two humans.

"We'reâ€|-----â€|" it panted.

"How ----," the blue-haired one said.

"I think we can ---- the ----â€|" said the one with big hair, taking out a PokÃ©ball, "Charizard! Go!"

She threw the PokÃ©ball into the grass, and a large, orange PokÃ©mon with wings and a burning tail appeared. When it roared, fire burst from its mouth into the sky.

\_ Charizardâ€| \_

- -

\_ â€|Why do I feel like I've seen it beforeâ€|? \_

- -

When it was done flaming, it looked down towards me. I stared into its eyes, ignoring the battle between us, awed by the familiarity of itâ€|

\_ Why? Why is it so familiar? \_

- -

"Charizard!" shouted the girl, "The ---- wants us to bring back Ash and Persian! Do it!"

\_ Whatâ€|? \_

- -

With a loud cry, Charizard flew into the air. It looked over the battle briefly, then dove down and grabbed Persian in its claws. Persian howled in surprise, but it recovered pretty quickly.

"Persian!! Pe-errr!"

\_ 'Ash!! Run for it!' \_

- -

"Per!?"

\_'What!?'\_

- -

"Piikachu!"

\_'Run! '\_

- -

Pikachu broke out of battle and ran towards me. Charizard was zooming in pretty fast. I glanced from one to another, not sure what to do.

"Zzaarrrd!!!"

"SIIIIAANN!"

I think Persian tried to stop Charizard, but it didn't work, because it reached out and grabbed me too.

"PIKAPII!!"

\_"ASH!! '\_

- -

Pikachu made a huge jump and grabbed onto Charizard. Seconds later, we were flying over the city.

"Pika!!" I said.

\_'I don't like it up here!! '\_

- -

Sparks of electricity flew from Pikachu's cheeks.

"Persian!!" Persian cried, "Pe-errrsian!"

\_'Wait!! If you shock Charizard, we'll \_all\_ fall! '\_

- -

"Pikaâ€|chuâ€| "

\_'Yeahâ€|you're rightâ€| '\_

- -

"Charrrrâ€| "

\_'Uh-huhâ€| '\_

- -

Trying to ignore how very high up we were, I stared at Charizard. I was a lot closer now, and I still couldn't shake off the feeling that I ought to know this Charizard very well

"Pikachu?" I asked.

'Where are we going?'

--

"Charizard"

'The HQ'

--

"Pikachu?"

'What's that?'

--

We all noticed a definite waver in the flight after I asked that, but Charizard recovered quickly.

"Charizzarrd?" Charizard muttered.

'Where've you been?'

--

I didn't really know the answer to that, so I decided not to say anything.

Before long, Charizard sailed downwards and finally landed on the roof of a building. It dropped us on the floor unceremoniously.

"Well ----, Charizard" said a voice.

I looked up from the ground to see a man in an orange suit looking down at us. He had a thin smile on his face. He also looked familiar and he scared me.

"Ash---- time, no see."

I had no idea what he meant by that.

"I'm ---- you ----- to ---- in."

"Perrrrrsian"

'Master'

--

The man glanced at Persian.

"Ah---- Persian. Meowth told me that you turned -----. You know



what ----- to -----â€| "

"Persiiian!"

\_'I am not a traitor!'\_

--

"Pika?" I whispered to Pikachu.

\_'What's a traitor?'\_

--

"Pikapiâ€|" it whispered back.

\_'Be quietâ€|'\_

--

The man laughed quietly.

"I ----- it ----- â€|â€|Ash? Are you ready to ----- Team Rocket?"

I just stared at him, because I didn't know what he just said.

"Perrrsiiannâ€|Persiannnâ€| "

\_'He doesn't understand youâ€|He only talks to PokÃ©monâ€|'\_

--

"What? That's ----- . -- ----- he can ----- me."

"Pikachuâ€|" I said.

\_'Persian's not lyingâ€|'\_

--

He looked surprised. He straightened himself up and looked demeaning at me.

"Then I ----- you'll ---- have to learn -----â€|Come on."

He reached out with his hand to help me up from the ground.

\_ \*They'll never find you\*\_

I blinked.

\_What was that?\_

\_ \*A Charizard, eh? I wonder why it wasn't out of its PokÃ©ball. It probably could have gotten you out of this mess before you got into it.\*\_

--

â€|These voices weren't realâ€|I was hearing them in my headâ€|

--

\_ \*Tsk tsk tsk. So many questions. Ask one at a time, young man, and you might get the answer you're looking for.\*\_

--

\_Waitâ€|It's only one voiceâ€|\_

--

\_ \*I am not trying to kill you. The only one preventing you from leaving thatâ€|is yourself. You can either stay there, or come out and join Team Rocket. It's up to you. I would think that the sooner you leave, the betterâ€|\*\_

--

"What's the ----- Ash?"

\_ \*How dumb do you think I am? I know you won't be totally loyal right away. You need another motive to stay with us. That's why I am keeping your PokÃ©mon under custody.\*\_

--

\_That voiceâ€|It's the same asâ€|\_

--

I stared up at the man in a new lightâ€|

\_I \_did\_ know him beforeâ€|\_

--

\_ \*Yes! I am Ash! And now that I'm ten, I can finally get my PokÃ©mon license. I will journey to gain the wisdom of PokÃ©mon training. And I hereby declare to the PokÃ©mon of the world, I will be a PokÃ©mon Master. PokÃ©mon Master! That is what I'll-!\*\_

--

I knew that voice. That was me!

\_PokÃ©mon Masterâ€|? Whatâ€|?\_

--

â€|It started off slowlyâ€|but I found myself remembering thingsâ€|They weren't all in orderâ€|and they didn't all make senseâ€|at firstâ€|but as I remembered more and moreâ€|I started to understandâ€|

Meâ€|Momâ€|Garyâ€|Professor Oakâ€|Pikachuâ€|Mistyâ€|Jessie, James, Meowthâ€|Pidgeotto,

Caterpieâ€|Brockâ€|â€|Everythingâ€|Everyoneâ€|â€|Now it made senseâ€|

â€|â€|And now I knew who this man was.

â€|He had been talking to me, but I hadn't been listening. I was too busy rememberingâ€|

I looked into his eyes. I felt something stirring within meâ€|something long dormant and forgottenâ€|a feeling older than meâ€|maybe even the entire human raceâ€|

\_ 'I know youâ€|I know who you are and what you've done to me, my PokÃ©mon, my friends, and a lot more people than I can nameâ€|'\_

--

The feeling was growingâ€|It was building up inside of meâ€|like it wanted to come out.

\_ 'â€|I can't let you keep doing thisâ€|I can't let you keep hurting peopleâ€|and PokÃ©monâ€|I can't let you ruin our lives with your greedâ€|You've done too much already, and now you need to stopâ€|and if you don't stop by yourself, I'll have to stop youâ€|'\_

--

I couldn't hold it in much longerâ€|I felt like I was going to burstâ€|

"â€|Ash?"

\_He's not listening to meâ€|\_

--

â€|The power was too strong. I had to let it go.

I clenched my fist together and closed my eyes. I could almost see the power inside of meâ€|It wanted outâ€|

I took a deep breath and aimed right at the man.

"MMMMEEEEEEWWWWW!!!!!"

I don't know how far he went. I didn't have time to check, because the power went straight back inside of me after bursting out. It covered me from both the inside and the outside. It took only seconds before I could feel nothing elseâ€|When I opened my eyes, the only color I could see was pure white. Through the humming noise, I heard Pikachu calling my nameâ€|I couldn't answer it. I could open my mouth, but I couldn't make any sound.

â€|After what seemed like an eternity, I could see and feel again. I opened my eyes and was surprised to find myself in the dark. Something was covering me up. I crawled forward to the small opening in front of me. I poked my head out.

"â€|PIKA!!"

\_ 'â€|ASH!!?' \_

- -

"Mew?"

\_ 'What?' \_

- -

I covered my mouth in surprise. I pulled myself out from under whatever it was I was under so I could get a better look at myself.

When I looked at Pikachu, it looked really bigâ€|the same size as meâ€|Persian was huge, and Charizardâ€|Tall as a buildingâ€|

A little nervous, I turned around to see what had been covering meâ€|

"Mew!?"

\_ 'My clothes!?' \_

- -

I looked down and saw that the tip of my tail was still underneath my shirt.

\_ Wait a minuteâ€|My tail!?' \_

- -

I jerked it out and stared at it. It was thin, pink, and got larger and rounder at the tip. I could move it anyway I wanted toâ€|I looked down. The first thing I noticed were my feet. They were veryâ€|largeâ€|They were also pink. I held out my hands, er, pawsâ€|They weren't very large at all, but they had three fingers each and they were pink.

I turned and stared at Pikachu. They all stared at me.

"Pikapiâ€|Pikaâ€|chuâ€| "

\_ 'Ashâ€|Youâ€|evolvedâ€|' \_

- -

I looked down at myself again.

"Mewwâ€| "

\_ 'I guess you're rightâ€|' \_

- -

Persian stepped forward.

"Persiannnâ€|Persiaannâ€| "

\_'A Mewâ€|The rarest PokÃ©mon in the worldâ€|'\_

— —

I glanced up in surprise.

"Mew!?"

\_'Really!?'\_

— —

Persian nodded.

"Persiaannâ€|Persiannnâ€| "

\_'Yesâ€|Master will want oneâ€|when he wakes upâ€|'\_

— —

"Mâ€| "

\_'Butâ€|'\_

— —

"Persiannnâ€|Persiaannâ€| "

\_'He's already lost his Mewtwoâ€|If he sees you now, he'll try to capture youâ€|'\_

— —

"Mew! Mâ€|mew! "

\_'But he can't capture me! Iâ€|can't let him!'\_

— —

"Persian, perrrâ€|Persiannâ€| "

\_'That doesn't mean he won't tryâ€|You'd best leave before he wakes upâ€|'\_

— —

"Pikaâ€| "

\_'Ashâ€|'\_

— —

I looked at Pikachuâ€|It looked so sadâ€|It made feel sad tooâ€|I smiled and hugged it. Now that we were the same size, it was easier than before.

"Mewâ€| "

\_ 'I'll come backâ€| '\_

- -

"Pikachuâ€| "

\_ 'You'd betterâ€| '\_

- -

I laughed and we let go. I looked at Persian.

"Meww?"

\_ 'What about you? '\_

- -

"Perrrrsiannnâ€| Persianâ€| "

\_ 'We'll be fineâ€| You take care of yourselfâ€| '\_

- -

I nodded.

"â€| Charrâ€| "

\_ 'â€| Ashâ€| '\_

- -

I looked up at Charizard.

\_ 'It's nervousâ€| '\_

- -

I blinked. I didn't know how I knew that, but I knew it without any doubt.

It took a deep breath.

"â€| Zard. "

\_ 'â€| Good luck. '\_

- -

With that out, it huffed and looked away. I smiled. It was just glad to get that out.

"Mewâ€| "

\_ 'You tooâ€| '\_

- -

\_ Giovanni's gonna wake up soonâ€| '\_

--

I glanced back at himâ€|He still seemed familiarâ€|even though I knew who he wasâ€|I felt like there was something else I should know about himâ€|

\_It'll probably be easier to figure out when he's awakeâ€|\_

--

â€|I didn't want to leave, but the feeling was urging me to leaveâ€|I knew better than to not listen to it.

I rose into the air. I wasn't sure exactly how I did thatâ€|but I liked it.

I pulled myself higher and higher into the sky. I knew that if I went higher, I would travel faster.

\_Wow. How'd I know thatâ€|?\_

--

"Piiikaa!!!"

\_ 'Goodbye!!!' \_

--

I looked down. Growing smaller each moment was a tiny, yellow Pikachu. It waved sadly and cried. It's sadness touched me even over the growing distance, and I cried too.

"Mmmeeewww!!!"

\_ 'Goodbye Pikachu!!!' \_

## 32. On A New Adventure

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 32

### Chapter 32

"On A New Adventure"

I had no idea where I was going. I just knew that I did have a destination, and that I would know it when I got there.

I had a lot of questions in my mindâ€|or, I should have, at least, but I couldn't concentrate on them. The pure joy of being alive flooded over me like it never had before. The ecstasy of being able to soar and fly like the birds was overwhelming. The beauty of the land and water below me was very gratifying. Maybe it just came from seeing the world from a different point of view. Maybe it was because I was no longer earthboundâ€|Whatever it was, it was nice.

The ground below me quickly gave way to ocean.

\_I wonder what's out hereâ€|?\_

--

I decided to just enjoy it. The salt air was nice, and the wind was warm. As I continued however, I sensed something colder in the airâ€|Something with a heart as cold as ice and just as unforgivingâ€|Not only that, but the air became heavier and foggyâ€|

I slowed down cautiously. Whatever was in front of me wasn't anywhere near my level of experienceâ€|It could probably take me out with one hitâ€|

I gathered my courage and gave out a soft cry.

"â€|Mew?"

\_'â€|Hello? '\_

--

That certainly got whatever-it-was's attention. I felt it searching for meâ€|I cringedâ€|It was so coldâ€|

â€|Who goes there?

I lost my concentration and dropped in the air for a second. I pulled myself back up to my previous height and responded.

"â€|Mewâ€| "

\_'â€|Meâ€| '\_

--

Through the fog and the mist, a figure appeared. It was large but thinâ€|I could feel its power from a large distance awayâ€|It frightened meâ€|

â€|I said, 'Who goes there?' 'Me' is not an answer. Tell me your name.

\_My name? Uhâ€|Well, at least that's not a \_hard\_ questionâ€|\_

--

Ash.

There was a tense silence from the stranger. I shivered.

â€|Your name cannot be Ashâ€|I know that you are a PokÃ©monâ€|There is no PokÃ©mon called 'Ash'.

"Mew?! "

\_'Huh?! '\_

--



\_â€|Wellâ€|umâ€|Persian saidâ€|Persian said 'Mew'â€|and that's all that I can sayâ€|I guess that must meanâ€|\_

--

Umâ€|I guess I'm a Mew then.

The stranger exploded forward until it was just a couple feet away from me. I could see it very clearly. It was at least five times my height, and it had cold, purple eyes that stared down at me emotionlessly. It had long arms that ended in three rounded fingers, and a long, powerful tailâ€|Its main color scheme seemed to be purple and whiteâ€|

â€|Mewâ€|I have been waiting for youâ€|â€|Allow me to introduce myselfâ€|I am Mewtwoâ€|

I didn't know what to say. That name sounded familiarâ€|besides the fact that it was Mew with an extra syllableâ€|

Uhâ€|Nice to meet you. My name's Ash. Umâ€|How could you have been waiting for me? Iâ€|didn't even know I was coming hereâ€|

â€|I know more than mostâ€|just as you doâ€|You came here because you were guided hereâ€|â€|and now that we are together, we can see whether or not the humans have done me a favor by bringing me to lifeâ€|

"Mew!?!"

\_ 'What!?!' \_

--

Mewtwo ignored my outburst.

â€|Follow meâ€|

It turned around and headed in the direction that I had been going.

"Mew!â€|â€|Mâ€|mewmew!!"

\_ 'Wait!â€|â€|Uhâ€|Where are we going!?' \_

--

Mewtwo ignored me and kept going. If I didn't follow it, I would end up losing it. I decided to follow.

We didn't have to go very far before we reached what had to be an islandâ€|only it was black. There was no life there whatsoever. The ground was covered with irregularly shaped objects. I felt through the earth that something else had once lived thereâ€|something that was hardly represented by ruins that I could see.

â€|This is my birthplaceâ€|

I glanced at Mewtwo in surprise. It had a look of bitter disgust on

its face.

â€|Horrible placeâ€|Destroyed it the first day I awakenedâ€|

\_What in the worldâ€|?\_

--

It shook its head as if shaking off a bad memory, and turned to me.

I started its reconstruction recentlyâ€|I haven't gotten very farâ€|but that shouldn't matter anymoreâ€|now that you're hereâ€|

\_Now that \_I'm\_ here? What's so special about me?\_

--

â€|â€|Let's go.

â€|Go?â€|â€|Go where? I asked.

Mewtwo floated downwards until it reached a flat area, separated from the surrounding ruins. Since it was waiting for me, I floated down after it.

Umâ€|What are we doing? I asked.

Mewtwo clenched its fist and glared at me. I saw a hint of blue in its purple eyes.

Years ago, a human gathered together a group of scientists to create the ultimate PokÃ©mon, using fossilized DNA from an ancient PokÃ©mon by the name of Mew.

\_Mew?\_

--

They tried many times, and failed each timeâ€|but they did eventually succeed. They created a new PokÃ©mon, unlike any other they had ever seenâ€|Its powers were so superior to anything else's, that they couldn't control it. It destroyed them all in one fit of rageâ€|but not before it learned of the name that the humans had given itâ€|They called the new PokÃ©monâ€|â€|Mewtwoâ€|

â€|â€|Why are you talking about yourself in third-person?

When I had finished destroying their pitiful lives and their shameful laboratory, I found what I had mistaken for a friendâ€|The very human that had ordered my creationâ€|He tried to train me, but I soon realized his true intentions. He only wanted to use me for his own gainâ€|I wouldn't let him do that. I had to leave.

Wowâ€|I know how you feelâ€|

That comment finally sparked a reaction from Mewtwoâ€|I think it was curiosityâ€|

â€|But that is all in the past nowâ€|Nowâ€|Now we have found each otherâ€|â€|Mewâ€|do you know why you are here?

Umâ€|â€|â€|No.

Then I will tell youâ€|You are here because fate brought us together. It was fate that we are both alive at the same time, and it is fate that will send one of us to our doom.

I didn't like where this was headedâ€|

Mewâ€|now is the time to test which is superiorâ€|The science of humansâ€|or the test of timeâ€|You have been around since ancient times, and I was created a few years agoâ€|Who do you think will emerge victorious?

\_Stop using such big wordsâ€|\_

--

Umâ€|â€|I don't think I'll win.

I don't think that was the answer it was expecting.

â€|What?

Wellâ€|You see, I just evolved, and I've never been in any battles, and I don't even know any of my own attacks, if I even have any, and you sound very powerful and dangerous and I really don't think it would be a fair battle if we battled each otherâ€|

\_That was a mouthfulâ€|\_

--

â€|Butâ€|â€|what aboutâ€|? What aboutâ€|â€|fate? All of theâ€|butâ€|â€|It just doesn't make senseâ€|We didn't meet each other on accidentâ€|We have to see who is the strongest!

Ohâ€|Wellâ€|Seeâ€|That's easy! You're the strongest! You could take me out with one hitâ€|Nowâ€|don't go and try it, okay? I think we both agree that you are the most powerful one hereâ€|That wasn't so bad, now was it?

Butâ€|â€|

â€|â€|â€|Heyâ€|You weren't planning on staying out here all by yourself, were you? It would get pretty lonelyâ€|

Of course not! If the humans could create me, how hard could it be to create more PokÃ©mon that are more powerful than the other PokÃ©mon?

â€|Uhâ€|â€|That'sâ€|not a good ideaâ€|â€|

Why not?

It just isn'tâ€|â€|Sayâ€|uhâ€|I think I'd better be getting back now

that we're done hereâ€¦umâ€¦â€¦You wanna come?

â€¦Youâ€¦â€¦You'reâ€¦â€¦You're asking me if I want to comeâ€¦?

I nodded.

That's what I just said, isn't it?

â€¦You would have me?

Huh?

â€¦It doesn't bother you that I wanted to kill you?

Wellâ€¦as long as you don't want to anymoreâ€¦

â€¦â€¦â€¦You are either very braveâ€¦or a complete foolâ€¦

"Me-wâ€¦" I laughed nervously.

### 33. Surprises

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 33

Chapter 33

"Surprises"

I did not know that Mews evolved from anythingâ€¦What did you evolve from?

"â€¦â€¦Mewwâ€¦" I muttered.

\_'â€¦â€¦Humanâ€¦'\_

--

What!? But humans aren't PokÃ©mon!

I shrugged.

"Mewwwâ€¦Me-ew, mewwâ€¦"

\_'I don't know how it happenedâ€¦It just didâ€¦'\_

--

â€¦â€¦So you evolved from a humanâ€¦and I was created by humansâ€¦â€¦

Something like thatâ€¦

â€¦You don't like talking about it?

I shrugged.

â€¦â€¦How long ago was it? Mewtwo asked.

What?

Your evolution.

â€|Umâ€|I don't know exactlyâ€|An hour or so, I guessâ€|

Really!?â€|Wow, you really meant it when you said that you just evolved, didn't you?

Uh-huh.

â€|â€|â€|What did you meanâ€|â€|when you said that you knew how I feltâ€|about having to leaveâ€|?

â€|â€|Let's just say I left a few timesâ€|

From what?

â€|â€|The 'boss'â€|

â€|â€|Giovanni?

Yeah, I guess soâ€|

\_â€|Wait a secâ€|How did itâ€|?\_

--

How did you know that?

He was the one who ordered my creation.

I didn't know what to say about thatâ€|

\_â€|The same man who hadâ€|â€|He did a lot of thingsâ€|\_

â€|â€|Giovanni Ketchumâ€|

Mewtwo said it so casually, I almost missed itâ€|I felt as if it had slapped me across my back and upside my head. I completely lost my concentration, and in doing so, I lost my ability to floatâ€|â€|I didn't notice that I was falling towards the seaâ€|

â€|Mew?

Before I knew it, I was very wet. That pulled me out of whatever I was in and I swam up to the surface and took a gulp of air.

â€|Are you alright?

â€|I think I misheard youâ€| I said.

â€|Misheard what?

Mewtwo floated down to the surface but didn't come in.

I thought for a second that you said 'Giovanni Ketchum'. I laughed loudly.

Butâ€|Mewâ€|â€|I did.

Water filled my mouth and this time I didn't do anything about itâ€|Mewtwo did though. It pulled me out of the water by the scruff of my neck. When I realized that I wasn't underwater anymore, I shook myself dry and spat out the saltwater.

â€|Are you okay? Mewtwo asked.

Noâ€| I answered, I keep hearing this voice in my headâ€|

â€|That's me.

I shivered and willed myself back into the water, but it didn't work. Mewtwo had a firm grip on me.

â€|Is something the matter?

â€|â€|My last name is Ketchumâ€| I said quietly.

Now it was Mewtwo's turn to be surprised. It dropped me and I landed back in the water. I floated up and sat on it. I waited for Mewtwo to say something else.

â€|Umâ€|Maybe it's just a coincidenceâ€|â€|Lot's of humans have the same last name, but they're not all relatedâ€|

â€|Rightâ€| I said, relieved to find a loophole.

â€|â€|You didn't know his last name?

I shook my head.

â€|Did he even tell you his name?

â€|Noâ€|

â€|â€|I wonder whyâ€|?

I floated up so we were eye-level.

Let's not worry about that. I want to go homeâ€|

Back to the humans' world?

Uhâ€|Noâ€|First of all, I am a human, and second of all, we all live on the same world.

â€|â€|You don't look like a human.

Mewtwo had ignored me enough before, so I decided it was my turn to ignore it.

Let's keep going, I said.

Mewtwo shrugged and we continued on our way.

\* \* \*

I wasn't sure whether to go to Viridian or Pallet. They were pretty close to each otherâ€|but I had to choose one or anotherâ€|

\_â€|Pikachu was withâ€|the boss last time I saw itâ€|It should've gotten back to Dr. Gray's by nowâ€|â€|Maybe it got farther than thatâ€|?â€|We should probably check Viridian firstâ€|\_

--

â€|Viridian? Mewtwo asked.

Uhhâ€|Yeahâ€|â€|How'd youâ€|?

â€|You said you knew Giovanniâ€|He lives in Viridian, doesn't he?

â€|Yeahâ€|â€|He doesâ€|

\_â€|Viridian's also the closest city to Pallet Townâ€|\_

--

I shoved that thought out of my mind and we headed to Viridian. Once we got pretty close, Mewtwo spoke up again.

We'd better keep a low profileâ€|

Why? I asked.

We're the two rarest PokÃ©mon on earth. If anyone saw us running wild, the word would be all over town in a flash.

â€|â€|Rightâ€|

The last thing I needed was to have someone try to capture meâ€|

Taking Mewtwo's advice, we traveled lower to the ground, and I led us to Dr. Gray's house. I really hoped they were all thereâ€|

This way.

I glanced back at Mewtwo. How would it know which way to go?

â€|Why?

Just trust me on thisâ€|â€|Humans are very unreliable creaturesâ€|

â€|â€|I resent thatâ€|

I followed it anyway. It floated down into the nearby woods and crouched there, watching the house. I did the same, but less willingly.

Umâ€|What are we doing? I asked.

Shâ€|You'll see.

I figured that was all I would get out of it, so I just waited.

â€|I don't see anything, I sighed after a while.

Mewtwo didn't answer me.

â€|â€|â€|This is boring. I'm just gonna go knock on the doorâ€|

No, wait! Don't do that!!

I left our hiding place and floated up to the door. Since I didn't think they would be able to hear a knock, I rang the doorbell.

â€|Mew! Get back here!

My name is Ash, I said, looking over my shoulder.

Whatever! Don't justâ€|float there thoughâ€|They'll see you!

That's my plan.

â€|But-

Well, Mewtwo did have a point, though. Floating was a little tiring, so I decided to stand.

After a little while, I heard footsteps coming and the door opened. It was Dr. Gray. He looked around.

"Hello? Who goes there?" he said, not seeing me.

I tried to cover up a laugh.

"Mew," I said.

\_'Me.'\_

--

â€|Mew, you are in so much troubleâ€| Mewtwo warned me.

Oh, be quiet. You sound like my mom.

â€|I guess your mother has more sense than you do.

Dr. Gray, who hadn't heard our conversation, of course, looked down. I saw his eyes widen, and he jumped about three feet into the air and backwards. His glasses got unhooked from one ear and he rapidly tried to straighten them and failed.

"â€|I can't believe it," he gasped, "A Mewâ€|Right here on my own doorstepâ€|"

â€|He sounds surprised, I commented.

You would be too, in his positionâ€|You'd better make your move while you still have the chanceâ€|



â€|Right.

"Hey, doc? Who is it?"

\_Mistyâ€|\_

--

I froze. Suddenly I couldn't remember what I was doing.

\_Mistymistymistymistyâ€|â€|She's not gonna recognize meâ€|â€|What do I do??\_

--

â€|Mewâ€|? Are you okay? What happened?

â€|It's Misty.

â€|Who?

Mistyâ€|

"Misty, you won't believe it until you see it! There is a Mew on my doorstep!"

"A what?"

More footstepsâ€|They were coming to see meâ€|

â€|Mewâ€|Those humans aren't going to be very open-minded about a rare PokÃ©mon in their midstâ€|

â€|What do you meanâ€|?

They'll want to capture you.

What!? They can't do that! They're my friends!

â€|They don't know that.

\_It's rightâ€|\_

--

"Oh my gosh!! It's so cute!" Misty exclaimed when she saw me.

\_â€|She just called me cuteâ€|\_

--

I wasn't sure how to take thatâ€|

"Yeahâ€|but what is it?" Billie asked.

"It's a Mewâ€|" said Dr. Gray, "I thought they had all gone extinctâ€|"

Misty came closer and knelt down.

"Awwâ€¦I bet Ash would love thisâ€¦â€¦"

Ehâ€¦hehhehâ€¦

Misty eyes widened and she stood up suddenly.

"Uhhâ€¦Did you guys hear that?" she asked.

"Hear what?" said Richie.

"â€¦PIKAPI!!!"

\_'â€¦ASH!!!'\_

--

Before I could blink, Pikachu had tackled me and we were rolling down the steps and onto the ground.

"Mew! Me-ew!!" I cried.

\_'Pikachu! What are you doing!?'\_

--

"Pikapiâ€¦!"

\_'I'm so glad you're backâ€¦!'\_

--

"â€¦Mewâ€¦" I smiled.

\_'â€¦Me tooâ€¦!'\_

--

"Uhâ€¦Looks like Pikachu likes that Mew," Misty said.

I suddenly remembered that they were there. I broke away from Pikachu and grinned at them.

"Mew! Mew?"

\_'Hi guys! Remember me?'\_

--

You fool. They can't understand that!

Shut up, I know what I'm doing, I snapped.

â€¦Don't get on my bad sideâ€¦

I gulped.

â€¦Umâ€¦Hi guysâ€¦ I said to the humans.

They all blinked in unison. It would have been funny if I hadn't been so tense.

"Umâ€¦Did you guys just hear that?" Brock asked.

"Yeahâ€¦What about you?" Billie said to Misty.

"I heard it, butâ€¦â€¦"

"â€¦Didn't it soundâ€¦?" Richie began.

It sounded like Ash, Taper said, saying what the others didn't want to admit.

They looked down at my PokÃ©mon.

"â€¦It didâ€¦" Misty said quietly.

"But that's impossible," Richie said, "Ash isn't here. How could it have been him?"

Now they were just getting annoying.

Hey you guys! Look over here! See the cute little Mew? That's \_me\_!

They all looked over at me. I frowned at them.

Hey! Don't you guys recognize me?

"I'veâ€¦never seen you beforeâ€¦" Misty said.

Now she had completely ticked me off. I flew up and knocked her on the head.

"Ow!" she exclaimed, "What was that for!?"

That's for all the times you knocked me on the head when I said something stupid, and all the times I should've done the same to you.

"â€¦Yep. That sounds like Ash, alright!" Brock laughed, "â€¦Didn't know he was that bold thoughâ€¦"

I knocked him on the head too.

I \_am\_ Ash!

"Owwâ€¦Okay, okayâ€¦If you insistâ€¦" Brock groaned.

You want me to prove it? Okayâ€¦A year ago, I got Pikachu, Misty fished me out of a river, and now I owe her a bicycle. Brock, I got the Boulder Badge from you by using Pikachu, but then the sprinklers went off, so I quit the match. You gave it to me anywayâ€¦Misty! I got the Cascade Badge with Butterfree and Pidgeotto, but Team Rocket interrupted right when I was winning-

"You weren't winning! I was!"

She clapped her hand over her mouth suddenly.

"Ash! It \_is\_ you!" she gasped quietly.

I dropped to the ground.

Right. How many times have I said that?

Misty knelt down to see me better.

"Wow, you sure have changed! What happened?"

Um! I evolved?

"But humans don't evolve."

Well, \_I\_ did! I huffed.

"That's certainly what it looks like, Taper added.

"Thanks, Taper, I said.

No problem.

Persian finally said something.

"Perrrsiann! Persiann!"

\_'Ash did evolve! I was right there when it happened!\_'

--

"So! this Mew! It's really that boy that was here before?" Dr. Gray said.

Billie looked like she was about to hit him, but thought better of it.

"Yeah. That Mew is Ash," she said.

"So! Oh, my! This is quite an amazing discovery! When the world hears about this-!"

No!! I cried.

"Huh? What's the matter?" he said.

Don't tell the whole world! If I want them to know, I'll tell them myself. You can't do that for me!!

"I told you there would be trouble! Mewtwo said.

I jumped. I had forgotten all about Mewtwo!

"What do I do now? I asked.

Don't ask me. You know these humans better than I do.

Rr!

\_It's rightâ€|\_

--

"â€|Ash? What are you going to do now? Can you change back?" asked Misty.

\_Change back?\_

--

I'd never thought of thatâ€|

Iâ€|don't knowâ€| I admitted.

"Well you can't stay like that forever! I've never heard of a PokÃ©mon becoming a PokÃ©mon Master! You're still gonna do that, aren't you?"

Wellâ€|uhâ€|

"Mistyâ€|PokÃ©mon can't un-evolveâ€|" Brock said, "Once they evolve, they're stuck like that unless they evolve again."

\_â€|Stuck?\_

--

Mewâ€|Please do something else. My leg's falling asleep.

\_Mewtwoâ€|\_

--

Do you want me to make them leave or something? I asked.

I don't know. I just need to stand up. This is getting really uncomfortable.

I grinned.

I told you it wasn't a good idea to hide back thereâ€|

And \_I\_ told \_you\_ not to ring the doorbell.

\_Yet another good pointâ€|\_

--

â€|Hey you guysâ€|D'you mind letting me in? Isn't it kinda awkward to just stand in the doorway?

"Uhâ€|Yeah, I guess so," Brock said.

"Come on in," Richie added.

I went inside, and Brock shut the door behind me. Mewtwo was still outsideâ€|but I think that was fine with it. It probably would've been nervous with all these humans around anywayâ€|

\_I hopeâ€|\_

#### 34. Time For Lunch

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 34

#### Chapter 34

"Time For Lunch"

"Ash, you have a lot of explaining to do," Brock said.

â€|â€|I do?

"Yeah. I meanâ€|You disappear for a while, and when you come back, you're a Mew. What gives?"

I blinked.

â€|Umâ€|â€|

Perhaps we shouldn't bother him with that, Taper broke in, I don't think he knows.

Well, duh, I said.

"Ohâ€|Of courseâ€|" Misty smiled, "What were we thinking? Imagine thatâ€|Asking Ash a question like-OW! Why you little-!!"

She lunged at me, but I easily dodged out of the way. She grabbed at me again, and I just moved to the side.

"Hold still so I can give you what you deserve!!" she growled.

Yeah rightâ€| I laughed.

"â€|â€|It's almost noonâ€|Anyone hungry?" Dr. Gray asked.

I grinned. For once, the doc had said something I liked.

\* \* \*

While everyone else was getting ready for lunch, Taper pulled me to the side.

You're not alone, Ash. I can tell.

Huhâ€|? Howâ€|?

There's someone outside, and it's not humanâ€|Why didn't you introduce us all?

Taper had certainly caught me off guard. I thought up the best excuse I could.

Uhhmâ€|It's afraid of humansâ€|

Nuh-uh. That thing's too powerful to be afraid of anything. Why is it

hiding?

â€|â€|It doesn't trust humansâ€|

Why does it trust you then?

Cause it doesn't think I'm human.

â€|I can understand thatâ€|

I \_am\_ though!!

â€|You certainly don't look it, Ash.

Butâ€|â€|

Nevermindâ€|â€|I suggest you do something about this though. I wouldn't let it stay out there all by itselfâ€|

It can take care of itself.

That's not what I'm worried aboutâ€|I'm worried about anyone who might run into it on accidentâ€|

I suddenly knew what it was talking about.

â€|â€|Taper?

Yeah?

Do you think I should go talk to it?

â€|If you want toâ€|Food's just about ready though.

I sniffed the air. Taper was rightâ€|Brock's cookingâ€|Yummyâ€|

â€|â€|I guessâ€|I guess it shouldn't take too longâ€|â€|I'll be right back, okay? Will you cover for me?

Sure.

Thanks.

Good luck.

Whatever.

I opened the door and went outside. I made sure to close the door behind me.

"â€|Mew?"

\_'â€|Mewtwo?\_'

--

Hm?â€|Oh! Mew! You decided to come back.

I looked around, not seeing Mewtwo.

“Where are you?”

Right where you left me.

I floated into the woods. To my surprise, Mewtwo was lying on the ground against a tree. When I got near, it stretched out and looked at me.

“What?” “I got bored and decided to take a nap.”

“Oh.”

“So, how'd it go?”

“Fine.” “We're about to have lunch.”

Yeah, I know. “Smells pretty good.”

You can smell that from here!?

Yeah. Can't you?

I sniffed again, trying to smell it. To my surprise, I could.

Wow! I can!

Yeah. “Most Pokémon \_do\_ have a very good sense of smell.”

“Uh-huh.” I said dryly.

“Aren't you going back in?” Mewtwo asked, reclining against the tree again.

“You're not coming?”

“Mm.” “No. I'd rather not.”

Why not? Brock's one of the best cooks I know.

Yeah, probably. “but I don't really care.”

Why not?

“Because they're human.”

“Mewtwo!! \_I'm\_ a human too!”

Mewtwo gave me a strange look.

You are not. You're a Mew.

Well- “Yeah, but-” “Um.” “Wait.” “No.” “I.” “.”

“Mew.” “Just trust me on this. You are a Mew.”

“No! And my name's not Mew! It's Ash!”

“I think it's Mew.”



And \_I\_ think it's \_Ash\_, okay?

Mewtwo shrugged.

Fine. Believe what you likeâ€|but I think a mirror would prove you wrongâ€|

I clenched my fists and really wished that I could hurt it, but I knew better than that.

Mewtwo gave me a sidelong glance.

Aren't you going back in? They're going to start wondering where you went. I don't think your Drowzee will be able to hold them off much longerâ€|Humans are very stubbornâ€|

â€|Yeah, and so am Iâ€|â€|And \_I'm\_ a human, too!

â€|Goodbye, Mew.

I just ignored it and went back inside.

"Ash! There you are!" Misty yelled, "Where did you go!?"

Umâ€|Outsideâ€|

"Why!?"

Uhhâ€|â€|Justâ€|becauseâ€|?

"Okay, I know you're hiding something, but that's just going to have to wait. Come onâ€|" She grinned. "â€|Do you want PokÃ©mon food or human food?"

I want \_real\_ food!! That PokÃ©mon stuff is gross!

Misty stifled a laugh.

\* \* \*

"â€|I can't believe itâ€|You shrunk, but your stomach's still the same sizeâ€|"

I glared at Misty.

You just can't leave me alone, can you?

"Noâ€|You kept leaving the rest of us alone so muchâ€|I guess I just have to make up for all the times you weren't aroundâ€|"

She sounded kindaâ€|sadâ€|when she said thatâ€|

"Wellâ€|We've still got the problem of the boss," Billie said, "He doesn't know where we are right now, but he'll figure it out sooner or later, and when he doesâ€|"

\_â€|That wouldn't be goodâ€|\_

--

"Why does he want Ash to be on Team Rocket so badly, anyway?" Richie asked, "It's not likeâ€|â€|It's not like you're famous or anythingâ€|"

I suddenly remembered what Mewtwo and I had been talking about before we got hereâ€|I completely froze with that thoughtâ€|I meanâ€|almost literallyâ€|I could not moveâ€|or thinkâ€|orâ€|

"Pika? Pikachu?"

\_'Ash? Are you okay?\_'

--

I tried to answer, but I couldn'tâ€|not reallyâ€|

"â€|wwwâ€|"

"Hey, Ash! Snap out of it," Brock said.

"â€|â€|Mewwâ€|"

Pikachu blinked.

"Pika \_chu\_â€|"

\_'If you're gonna talk, say somethingâ€|'\_

--

"â€|â€|Mewwwâ€|â€|"

"â€|Pika?"

\_'â€|Ash?\_'

--

I felt like I was going to cryâ€|

"â€|CHU!!!!!" Pikachu said, Thundershocking me.

"MEWWWW!!!!!" I screeched.

â€|At least that snapped me out of it.

I glared at Pikachu angrily.

"\_Mew\_!!" I said, smacking Pikachu on the head.

"Pika!" it cried.

It glared back at me.

"Chuâ€|" it growled in warning.

Sparks started to fly from its cheeks. I growled at it and clenched my fists. I could feel my tail twitching behind me.

"Hey, you two! Stop it! No fighting atâ€|erâ€|\_on\_ the table!" Brock interrupted.

We both stopped suddenly. I glanced at everyone else. They were all staring at usâ€|

"Mâ€|â€|Mewwâ€|" I said sheepishly.

\_ 'Uhâ€|â€|Sorryâ€|'\_

--

"â€|Pikachuâ€|" Pikachu said.

\_ 'â€|Me tooâ€|'\_

--

I 'heard' Taper laughing. I glanced around until I saw it in the corner, grinning stupidly.

What's so funny? I asked.

â€|I think you \_do\_ know an attack, Ashâ€| it replied.

â€|And that would beâ€|?

Poundâ€|I oughta know. I can use that attack tooâ€|And you were definitely Pounding your Pikachuâ€|and Misty and Brock too, earlierâ€|

I blinked.

Uhhâ€|Sureâ€|

\_â€|Whatever.\_

### 35. Rushing

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 35

Chapter 35

"Rushing"

\*danger-anger-hatred-pain-suffering--\*

I have no idea how I knew, but I knew that something was going on outside, and I could easily guess that Mewtwo was in the middle of it.

\_It's gonna do something badâ€|\_

--

Everyone else was busy, and I knew I was the only one who knew, so I had to do something.

\_â€|Mewtwoâ€|â€|please hold that thoughtâ€|\_

--

I zipped away from everyone else and headed outside very quickly. I got to the front door and I realized that I wasn't going to be able to open it in timeâ€|Instead, I just went straight through itâ€|

â€|That wasn't painless, let me assure youâ€|

After busting through the doc's door, I flipped through the air and landed with a thump onto his lawn.

\*painpainpainpainpainâ€|\*

I shook off the splinters and wood chips I had acquired and looked up.

MEWTWO!!! I cried.

There before me were Mewtwo, Jessie, James, and Meowthâ€|They wereâ€|fightingâ€|kind ofâ€|It was actually more of a torture session than a battleâ€|Team Rocket wasn't holding out too wellâ€|

Mewtwo! Stop it!! I cried again.

No, I don't like Team Rocket, but I couldn't stand seeing anyone suffer the way they wereâ€|

Stop it, Mewtwo!!

I flew up and hit Mewtwo as hard as I could. It barely flinched. Instead, it turned its gaze towards me. I backed up at the cold, blue glow in its eyes.

â€|What are you doing, Mew? it asked, Can't you see that I have everything under control?

â€|Mewtwo was really starting to freak me out.

You have them under too much control! Can't you see that you're hurting them!?

Don't you think I know that?

You mean youâ€|

\_It doesn't care that it's hurting themâ€|It just wants them to sufferâ€|the way it didâ€|\_

--

â€|Mewtwo, they didn't do anything to youâ€|

â€|They came here looking for youâ€|They want to find you and bring you back toâ€|their bossâ€|

I glanced at them. When they looked at me, their faces were full of painâ€|and pleadingâ€|They knew that I was the only one who could

save themâ€|

I turned back to Mewtwo.

Mewtwo, listen to me. It's not their fault. Don't make them pay for something they didn't doâ€|

It's not that, Mewâ€|They may not be directly responsible, but they work for the worst of them allâ€|â€|They don't care what happens to any of us, as long as they keep getting paidâ€|

And you're no different from them! I countered, You just want to hurt someone because all you want is revenge! Mewtwo, that's not how it worksâ€|

And how would you know!? Mewtwo snapped back dangerously.

Iâ€|â€|I knowâ€|becauseâ€|â€|â€|becauseâ€|â€|Because I've been hurt tooâ€|and I know how you feel, Mewtwoâ€|â€|but don't hurt these guysâ€|If you want to get evenâ€|â€|â€|make sure you do it right the first timeâ€|and make sure you won't have any regretsâ€|â€|â€|Andâ€|â€|remember thatâ€|â€|we're all peopleâ€|human or PokÃ©monâ€|â€|

Mewtwo kept its eyes on the three Rocketsâ€|It narrowed them one last time and finally released its mental hold on them.

Go to your master, it told them, Tell him that Mewtwo has returnedâ€|and that I'm comingâ€|for himâ€|

They nodded fiercely, then stumbled to their feet and ran away as fast as they couldâ€|They didn't even mention anything about blasting offâ€|

\_They must be really scaredâ€|\_

--

â€|Mewtwoâ€|did you really mean that?

â€|Mean what?

â€|That you're going back to the boss.

â€|Yesâ€|â€|Someone needs to make him payâ€|

Mewtwo raised its fists and stared at the empty air.

â€|â€|and I know just how to do itâ€|

I gulped. Mewtwo was \_really\_ scaring meâ€|I was very glad that it was on my sideâ€|

"â€|\_MY DOOR\_!!"

I spun around to see Dr. Gray staring agape at the Mew-sized hole I had made in his door.

â€|Oopsâ€|

He's gonna see me! Mewtwo hissed.

Uhâ€|Hide?

Mewtwo ducked low and crawled behind a tree.

â€|Somebody got in troubleâ€| Taper said sing-song.

Uhhmmâ€|

Dr. Gray opened up the door and stepped outside.

"Mew!! Uhâ€|I mean, Ash! Why did you \_do\_ that!?"

\_Thinkofanexcusethinkofanexcusethinkofanexcuseâ€|â€|\_

--

I blinked.

Behind Dr. Gray, a small crowd was formingâ€|

\_Oh greatâ€|Any of them will be able to tell if I'm lying or notâ€|\_

--

â€|Tell them the truth, Mewtwo said.

I jumped.

What!?

â€|Just say that you had to come out here toâ€|save someone in needâ€|A PokÃ©mon in needâ€|Say that you saved it, and now it's gone.

â€|That's not the truth!

Yes it is. Isn't Meowth a PokÃ©mon?

\_Whoaâ€|That's pretty goodâ€|\_

--

Iâ€|uhâ€|â€|I had toâ€|saveâ€|aâ€|PokÃ©monâ€|â€|in needâ€|â€|umâ€|â€|It's gone now, though, soâ€|â€|

"Yeah right, Ash," Misty scoffed.

But it's true!

"No it's not. Do you really think we're that stupid? No one, not even you, would bash through a door just to save some PokÃ©mon. Come on. What's the real reason?"

â€|She's goodâ€| Mewtwo commented.

Shut up, I retorted.

What was that?

Nothing, I said quickly.

She had me in a tight spotâ€¦I couldn't make up any more lies without changing my story, but I couldn't tell them the truth eitherâ€¦

"Yeahâ€¦He's lyingâ€¦Look at 'im. It's taking him so long to think of something else to sayâ€¦" Billie said.

\_That's notâ€¦\_entirely\_ trueâ€¦\_

--

â€¦You might as well just tell us, Ash, said Taper.

Ughhâ€¦Should I tell them, Mewtwo?

â€¦No.

Then what do I do?

â€¦Nothingâ€¦Change the subjectâ€¦

Are you crazy!? They'll just change it back!

It's worth a tryâ€¦

Ummâ€¦â€¦I, uhâ€¦â€¦I'm sure the door can be fixedâ€¦easilyâ€¦ I laughed nervously.

"â€¦Nice try, Ash," Brock said.

â€¦None of your ideas are working, I told Mewtwo.

Thenâ€¦come up with one of your ownâ€¦I don't do much talking to humans, you knowâ€¦

â€¦â€¦I hate to say this, but I know how you feelâ€¦

Once again, I felt that strange spark of curiosity come from Mewtwo.

â€¦â€¦You knowâ€¦It's notâ€¦that big of a dealâ€¦â€¦umâ€¦Maybe we can just forget about it?

"â€¦You're not gonna tell us, are you?" Misty asked.

I thought about it, then shook my head.

"Thenâ€¦â€¦I guess we'll just have to find outâ€¦"

Misty went down the steps and came forwardâ€¦She was coming into the woodsâ€¦

â€¦Mewtwo! Please don't do anything too harshâ€¦ I pleaded. I didn't want the same thing happening to Misty that had happened to Team Rocket.

â€|Just get her away, and I won't have to.

\_Uh-ohâ€|\_

--

Uhhâ€|Misty?

I did my best to block her way.

Youâ€|don't want toâ€|go over thereâ€|

"That sounds familiarâ€|"

â€|It does?

"Hey, Ash! Why don't you just tell us, and we won't have to go see?" Brock suggested.

Ummâ€|Oâ€|kayâ€|â€|butâ€|â€|let's goâ€|insideâ€|â€|

\_â€|where it's safeâ€|\_

--

Mew, if you tell themâ€|â€|

It didn't need to finish its sentence.

I knowâ€|â€|I know.

"Butâ€|But there's still a hole in my door!" Dr. Gray exclaimed.

Ohâ€|umâ€|

"We'll get that fixed later, doc. Kay?" Brock said.

"Butâ€|â€|"

"It's just a door," Billie said.

"It is not just a doorâ€|! This house doesn't even belong to me! I'm just borrowing it from the boss because I need a lab to work for himâ€|"

He's on Team Rocket? Mewtwo asked.

â€|Yeahâ€| I said.

Did you know that?

â€|â€|I'll explain laterâ€|

"â€|This isn't your house?" Billie asked.

"I just said that it wasn't, didn't I?"



"Wellâ€¦â€¦Yeah, I guess soâ€¦"

"â€¦He's going to be so mad when he finds outâ€¦"

â€¦If he finds out, said Mewtwo.

I forgot that I was supposed to be hiding Mewtwo, and looked in its direction.

What are you talking about?

Mew, I wasn't lying when I said I would see him againâ€¦â€¦It will be either today or tomorrowâ€¦â€¦You'll probably want to come with me, Mew.

â€¦â€¦I will?

Yesâ€¦â€¦Don't you have a question you want to ask him?

Aâ€¦â€¦â€¦â€¦.

\_â€¦a questionâ€¦â€¦\_

--

â€¦Do I have to?

â€¦â€¦Do you want to?

Wellâ€¦I meanâ€¦I don't have to. It's not really that big of aâ€¦â€¦â€¦I meanâ€¦It's notâ€¦â€¦Iâ€¦â€¦umâ€¦â€¦

â€¦It's up to youâ€¦

"Drowzee?"

\_ 'Who are you talking to?' \_

--

I spun around then looked down. Taper was practically standing under me.

Taper!!

I know you're talking to someone.

Can't I have a moment's private conversation!?

â€¦Nope.

Taperrrâ€¦

"â€¦Maybe we should just go out and buy a new door right now," Richie said.

"\_No\_!!" Dr. Gray protested, "Those things are expensive!! Andâ€¦and besidesâ€¦What if they came insideâ€¦andâ€¦â€¦umâ€¦â€¦What if they

saw Mew!?"

ASH! I reminded him.

"Same thing," he shrugged.

If I had a mind to, I wouldâ€¦

Uh-uh-uhâ€¦ Taper scolded.

I tried to control my temper, but it wasn't easy.

"Hey, I can fix the door for you," Brock said, "It won't be hard at allâ€¦ I might need a little help, but we've got lots of helpers here."

"Wait a secâ€¦ I'm not gonna fix someâ€¦ doorâ€¦ just so you won't get in trouble," Billie said.

Billie, you don't really want the boss mad at him, do you? I asked, just because having the boss mad at anyone wasn't a good thingâ€¦

She mumbled a 'no', but I could tell she didn't really mean it.

â€¦ She's angry at himâ€¦ I wonder whyâ€¦? \_

--

â€¦ Can't you just find out for yourself? Taper asked me.

What do you mean?

You're a psychic PokÃ©mon too. It's not really that hard once you get the hang of it.

You mean you want me toâ€¦ No way! Isn't that a little rude!?

â€¦ Not too muchâ€¦

â€¦ Mewâ€¦ Mewtwo interrupted, I am getting sick and tired of all these humans. Get them awayâ€¦ please.

â€¦ Brock? I asked.

He turned towards me.

"Yeah?"

Ummâ€¦ Shouldn't you get to work?â€¦ On the door, I mean.

"Huh? Ohâ€¦ Yeah! That's a good idea, Ashâ€¦ All right! I'm gonna need some wood, a nice toolset, nails, screwsâ€¦"

Dr. Gray was happy to supply Brock with equipment, and while everyone else got to work, I had another talk with Mewtwoâ€¦ I probably should've helped with the door, since I did make the hole and all, butâ€¦

## 36. Training

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 36

Chapter 36

"Training"

â€|I'm glad that we're finally away from themâ€| Mewtwo said.

Mewtwo had led me far into the woods. It was cooler in there, darker, but more lonelyâ€|I think all the other PokÃ©mon were afraid of usâ€|I know I was afraid of Mewtwoâ€|

â€|Why do you hate them so much? I asked, but even as I asked, I began to wonder if I didn't already know the answerâ€|

â€|Because they're humans.

â€|â€|I knew you were gonna say thatâ€|

â€|That's goodâ€|That means you're getting better.

Huh?

â€|â€|Mew, I want you to come with me when I go to seeâ€|Giovanniâ€|

â€|â€|â€|Are you sure?

Don't you want to come?

I couldn't answer that question. I didn't knowâ€|

Mewâ€|Alone, I am dangerousâ€|but if I have an allyâ€|

I'm not really that much of an ally, you know, I interrupted, I uh, only know one attack.

Yesâ€|I am aware of thatâ€|but with some trainingâ€|

Did you just say training?!

Ehâ€|Yesâ€|If you would let me train you-

Wait a sec! \_You\_ want to train \_me\_!?

Now Mewtwo looked annoyed.

Yes, that's what I saidâ€|I believe that if you reached a high enough level, you could be quite a formidable opponent.

Butâ€|

Now, we won't be able to get very farâ€|especially at this rateâ€|so I suggest we get to work right away.

â€|What kind ofâ€|training did you have in mind?

At the very least, you should learn all of your natural attacksâ€|

Do you know what they are!? I asked.

I think I was getting a little excited. Anything would be better than only knowing Pound.

Yesâ€|I did do a little research before I destroyed myâ€|birthplaceâ€|â€|Mews learn Pound, Transform, Metronome, Mega Punch, and Psychic.

\_Pound, Transâ€|Wait, that can't be rightâ€|\_

--

Did you say Transform?

Yes.

Butâ€|I thought only Ditto could learn Transform!

â€|There are only two PokÃ©mon that learn Transform, Ditto and Mewâ€|

\_If I can learn Transformâ€|\_

--

This was getting very exciting.

--

All right! Let's get started!! I cried.

â€|That was quickâ€|You didn't sound so eager beforeâ€|

--

Yeah, well, I am now! Come on! Let's get going!!

\* \* \*

â€|Try it againâ€| Mewtwo said tiredly.

I concentrated as hard as I could on turning into Mewtwo, but it still didn't work.

â€|It's not working, Mewtwoâ€| I sighed.

â€|I guess you don't have enough experienceâ€|

But I thought you said I did!

Wellâ€|â€|you're usually supposed to have \_winning\_ experienceâ€|not losingâ€|

It had a point there. No matter how hard I Pounded, or how easy it went on me, I still couldn't hurt, let alone beat, Mewtwo.

“But who can I beat? I asked.

Mewtwo closed its eyes in thought. After a few seconds it opened them again. It had a strange look on its face, kind of like amusement.

I think I have an idea” it said.

Well? I asked impatiently.

Your human friends may be able to help us out here” They are Pok mon trainers, right?

I suddenly knew where he was going.

And at least one of their Pok mon must be easy to beat! I finished.

Mewtwo nodded.

Strange though, that a Pok mon would ask for help from a human” it commented.

I didn't say anything, but I didn't think it was too strange”

We went back to the house. The sun was setting, and the door was almost fixed.

“That sure was quick”

--

“That actually took a few hours, Mewtwo corrected.

Wha-? Huh” Mewtwo, not you too” “Hey, that rhymed”

Mewtwo gave me a low glance.

Um” I mumbled.

Go tell them what you want, Mewtwo said gently.

“That I want one of them to fight me? I asked weakly.

I was starting to wonder whether any of them would actually go easy on me”

Yes”but remember, don't tell them why you want to gain experience”

“Why not? I asked, completely missing its point.

Do you want them to follow us to the headquarters? Mewtwo asked.

That wasn't what I had been thinking of at all, but I decided not to say so.

“Um” I”guess”not” I lied.

Actually, I wouldn't have minded having them follow alongâ€¦for backupâ€¦I knew I could trust themâ€¦

Well, hurry up. I want to leave \_tomorrow\_.

Okay, okayâ€¦Sheeshâ€¦

I floated out to the front yard and drifted forward until someone noticed meâ€¦It happened to be Billie who spotted me first.

"\_Ash Ketchum! Where have you been!?" she shouted, deafening everyone who was next to her.

Umâ€¦

Misty backed a good distance away from Billie.

"Yeah! This was your fault, you know!" she added.

Wellâ€¦Iâ€¦

Taper, who wasn't actually helping with the door but was watching from the side, chuckled to itself.

You've got some more explaining to do, Ashâ€¦

Shut up, Taperâ€¦

Ohhâ€¦You're getting touchy, Ashâ€¦

I decided it was best to just ignore Taper.

"Pikapikachu, pika!?"

'\_Ash, you'd better have a really good excuse for not helping us with this door!\_'

--

I cringed. Now even Pikachu was mad at meâ€¦

I let myself down to the ground, and looked at it.

Wellâ€¦I was actually justâ€¦â€¦I wasâ€¦umâ€¦â€¦â€¦I was trainingâ€¦I finished quietly.

"What were you training, Ash? It's not like you have any Po-â€¦â€¦" Misty trailed off.

Brock finally joined the conversation.

"So, you decided you were going to train yourself, Ash?" he asked.

Umâ€¦â€¦I guess so.

"Did it help?" Billie asked.

Ummmmâ€|notâ€|reallyâ€|â€|

"Ohâ€|That's too bad."

"So, what happened?" Misty asked, "How come it didn't help?"

Wellâ€|â€|umâ€|I couldn't win any battlesâ€|â€|

There was a pause as they realized what I had said and tried to hold in their laughter.

Misty finally spoke.

"Wellâ€|â€|This is a big changeâ€|â€|Mr. PokÃ©mon Master can't win a battle against a wild PokÃ©monâ€|â€|" She covered her mouth and laughed.

It's not funnyâ€|â€|

"Yes it is," Billie said, "All the wild PokÃ©mon around here are at really low levelsâ€|Even you should be able to beat them!"

"I betâ€|I bet you couldn't even beat a Caterpie!" Misty laughed.

It's not funny! I repeated.

\_â€|but it will be when I learn Transform and I can turn into a Caterpieâ€|That'll teach herâ€|\_

--

"Pikachuâ€|Pikaâ€|"

I glared at Pikachu. Even it was laughing at me.

\_All rightâ€|That's it.\_

--

I stepped in front of Pikachu and tried to make myself look tough.

Pikachu! I challenge you to a match!

Pikachu stopped laughing and stared at me with wide eyes. After a brief moment, it went back to rolling around on the ground.

I deflated.

\_Pikachuâ€|\_

--

â€|Oh, I seeâ€|Ash wants to battle you guys so he can gain more experience and get strongerâ€|â€|You've gotta admit, he's got gutsâ€|Taper said.

"You meanâ€|if we battle you, we don't have to work on this door?"

Billie asked.

Yeah! Come on! Let's battle!

Billie jumped up and into the lawn and pulled out a Pok  ball.

"Then I'm ready! Go! Venomoth!!"

"Veno! Moth!"

\_Venomoth  |?\_

--

I jumped into battle too.

\_This isn't gonna be easy  |That thing looks tough  |\_

--

  |Mew  |You \_should\_ have an advantage here  |as long as it doesn't use Leech Life  | Mewtwo said from its spot in the woods.

Um  |What happens if it uses Leech Life? I asked.

Psychic Pok  mon are weak against Bug attacks.

  |Oh.

However, Venomoth is also a Poison-type, so if you use  |Wait a sec  |I didn't teach you that, did I?

Whatever it is, you're probably right.

Then in that case  |  |um  |you'd better use Pound.

I sighed.

One Pound, comin' right up.

"Venomoth! Stun Spore!"

\_Stun  |?\_

--

Before I could even begin to attack, Venomoth was already shaking out its Stun Spore, and I was paralyzed. The awful stuff clung to me and made it impossible to move  |

Uh  |Mewtwo? This isn't working.

  |I thought she was supposed to be going easy on you  |

Huh? Oh  |Yeah! Billie!! I called out, Aren't you supposed to be going easy on me!?

"Um  |I thought I was  |How much easier can it get?"

I can't move!!



"Ohâ€¦Sorry, Ashâ€¦Umâ€¦Let's seeâ€¦How about if I just use Venomoth's weakest attack?"

That'sâ€¦fine with meâ€¦ I said, still trying to move, but still failing.

"Venomoth! Tackle attack!" Billie ordered.

\_Oh greatâ€¦\_

--

I braced myself and let it hit. It zoomed down at me and managed to whack me hard enough to make me tumble over several times.

"Ooâ€¦Sorryâ€¦" Billie said.

I winked my eyes open and realized I was facing the grass. I pushed myself up and turned around, but then I fell down again.

"Mewwwâ€¦" I groaned.

\_ 'Owwwâ€¦' \_

--

"Pikapika!?" Pikachu cried, running over to me.

\_ 'Are you okay!?' \_

--

I rubbed my head and grinned weakly.

"Mewâ€¦"

\_ 'I could be betterâ€¦' \_

--

"Pikachuâ€¦"

\_ 'You should be more carefulâ€¦' \_

--

"Mew!? Mee-ew!"

\_ 'Me be more careful!? It was Billie and her Venomoth that did it!' \_

Pikachu smiled sadly.

"Pikaaaâ€¦"

\_ 'Rightâ€¦' \_

--

Billie recalled her Venomoth and came over to me.

"Are you okay, Ash? I didn't mean to hurt you \_that\_ muchâ€¦I guess I overestimatedâ€¦"

"Mewâ€¦"

\_'It's okayâ€¦'\_

--

"â€¦Huh?"

\_Oh yeah. She can't understand that.\_

--

I said it's okay.

"Wellâ€¦if you say soâ€¦"

Brock looked up from his fixing.

"Hey Ash, you want some Paralyze Heal?"

That would be niceâ€¦

After a quick job of fixing me up, Misty decided it was her turn to beat, I mean, \_battle\_ me.

"Okay, Ash. If you lose this match, I'll make sure you never forget itâ€¦â€¦Psyduck! I choose you!"

She threw out her PokÃ©ball, and sure enough, the comical-looking yellow duck that couldn't even \_swim\_ was ready to battle me.

\_Wellâ€¦I guess I'd better win, then.\_

--

"Psyduck! Scratch attack!"

"Psyduck!!"

Psyduck dashed forward and Scratched me as hard as it could. I flinched as it hit, then looked up.

"Psyduck, psy!" Psyduck quacked.

\_'I'm pretty tough, huh?'\_

--

I glared at it.

You littleâ€¦That \_hurt\_!

"Wellâ€¦At least you're not out of the battle yet," Misty

grinned.

That's true|

You'd better fight back, Mewtwo suggested, or even a weak opponent like that one will beat you.

Right, I said.

I jumped up and Pounded Psyduck forcefully.

"You \_idiot\_!!" Misty shouted, "You just hit it on the head!!!!"

I glanced at Psyduck. Sure enough, a large welt was forming on the top of its head, where I had Pounded it.

â€|â€|Oopsâ€|

"Pssyyyyâ€|"

\_ 'Now \_that\_ hurtâ€|' \_

--

Iâ€|I'm sure it didâ€| I laughed nervously, Nowâ€|no need to, umâ€|you knowâ€|

"â€|Ash, I think you know what's gonna happen next," Misty said dryly.

Uhhâ€|

"â€|Duuckâ€|"

Psyduck tensed up, and its eyes started to glow a deep blue color.

\_This isn't goodâ€|\_

--

"Psyâ€|â€|Duck!"

Its brainwaves suddenly took hold of me and before I knew it, I was flying backwards. Psyduck sent me crashing right into a nearby tree.

"Mewwâ€|"

\_ 'Owwâ€|' \_

--

"Psyduckkâ€|"

\_Not done yet?\_

--

Psyduck lifted me up again, brought me a little forward, then banged me against the tree againâ€¦I had thought it had hurt the first timeâ€¦I was wrongâ€¦

"â€¦Psyduck?" Misty asked.

"Psyyyyyâ€¦"

I tried to get up, but Psyduck had already weakened me too muchâ€¦I couldn't defend myself anymoreâ€¦Just let whatever happens happenâ€¦

"Pika! Pikapi!!"

\_ 'Ash! Stop it, Psyduck!!!' \_

- -

"Psyduck!! Return!"

"Pssy?"

A beam of red light engulfed Psyduck and it went back in its PokÃ©ball.

\_ That's goodâ€¦ \_

- -

I sighed, one of the few things I could do at the moment.

"Pikachu?"

\_ 'Are you all right?' \_

- -

â€¦No.

"Chuâ€¦"

\_ 'Ohâ€¦' \_

- -

"Hey, Brock," Misty said, "Get out your potion bag again. I think a certain Mew needs it."

### 37. Transform

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 37

Chapter 37

"Transform"

"Let's try this againâ€¦" Misty said.

I sighed in response. The stars were already coming out and they still wouldn't give me a restâ€¦It was probably for the better though, because if they did, then Mewtwo certainly wouldn't.

"Ready, Ash?"

I got up and stood in front of her.

Ready as I'll ever beâ€¦

"Okay then! This one should be no problem! Go, Goldeen!"

She threw out her PokÃ©ball and Goldeen appeared in a flash of light. Afterwards, it commenced to flop around on the ground.

"Now, Ash, if you lose \_this\_ one too, we'll really have good reason to make fun of you," she said.

â€¦Kinda feel sorry for Goldeenâ€¦

"Goldeen could beat you easily in the water! All right, Goldeen! Peck!"

\_â€¦Peck?\_

--

Goldeen flopped forward and Pecked me with its horn. I flinched, but it didn't too much damageâ€¦It just left a scratch.

â€¦Hey! I'm all right! I grinned.

"Pikachuâ€¦"

\_ 'Yeah, now fight backâ€¦' \_

--

"Mewâ€¦"

\_ 'Rightâ€¦' \_

--

I jumped forward and whacked Goldeen on the head.

"You are \_so\_ lucky you're not fighting Psyduck this time," Misty said with a laugh.

Did anyone ask you?

She just laughed some more.

"Goldeen! Tail Whip!"

Goldeen flopped towards me again, this time, it turned around and buffeted me with its big tail fins.

"Mewâ€¦" I complained.

\_ 'Heyâ€|' \_

- -

Mew, try using Thunderbolt, Mewtwo said.

What!? I can't use that!

Yes you can. I should think that you've experienced it enough times to have gained a sufficient electric power.

Say whatâ€|?

I had no idea what it was talking about, but that was worth a try. I closed my eyes and remembered all of the times Pikachu had used Thunderbolt, both on me and our opponents.

"Meeeâ€|â€|www!!!!!"

From out of nowhere, a huge blast of electricity went from me to Goldeen. It flashed brightly and I heard it cry in pain, but it was soon over after that.

"What in the worldâ€|!?! " Misty exclaimed.

I opened my eyes and stared at the cooked fish.

â€|Whoaâ€|

"Pipikachu!"

\_ 'How did you do that Ash!?' \_

- -

â€|Umâ€|

"I didn't know you could use \_that\_ attack!" Misty exclaimed, "â€|Why didn't you use it on Psyduck?"

â€|Uhâ€|

"Goldeen! Return!â€|So Ash, was that enough experience for you?â€|Why were you trying to make yourself stronger anyway?"

Umâ€|So I can learnâ€|Transformâ€|

That shocked them. They all stared at me with open mouths.

"B-butâ€|I thought only Ditto could learn Transformâ€|" Misty sputtered.

Well, yeah, but Mew-â€|sâ€|can learn it tooâ€|

\_ That was a close oneâ€|I almost told them about Mewtwoâ€| \_

- -

"Pikapi!"

\_'Battle me! '\_

--

"Mew!?"

\_'You!?' \_

--

No way, Pikachu, you're too strong, there's no way I can-

"Pikapiâ€|"

\_'Yes you canâ€|' \_

--

But-! Wait, why are you so sure!?

"Pikachuâ€|"

\_'You'd stand a chance if you were a Pikachuâ€|' \_

--

I suddenly knew what it meant, but I still didn't thinkâ€|

"Pika!"

\_'Come on! '\_

--

I sighed.

If you insistâ€|

"Pikachu!"

\_'I'll let you go first! '\_

--

That'sâ€|nice of youâ€|

Mew, try Transform. Maybe it'll work, now that you actually beat someone.

â€|I guessâ€|It can't hurtâ€|

I closed my eyes and concentrated on Pikachu. I remembered all the times that I had spent with it, and all that we'd done togetherâ€|

"â€|Pikachu."

\_'â€|Nothing happened.'\_

--

I opened my eyes and looked at myself. Pikachu was right. I was still a Mew.

"Mewwâ€|"

\_'Lemme try againâ€|'\_

--

I tried again. This time, I tried to think about Pikachu itself. I remembered all the battles we had been in, and all the times it had Thundershocked me, and it's speed, and the color of its furâ€|

â€|I think I changed.

"Pikapipika!!"

\_'Ash! You did it!!'\_

--

I opened my eyes again and looked down. Now I was yellowâ€|

\_Oh cool, I can't believe itâ€|\_

--

I twitched my eyes and turned around to look at my tail. I recognized the zigzag lightning tail that used to only belong to Pikachu.

"Pika!" I cried.

\_'I did it!'\_

--

I covered my mouth and laughed.

"Pikachu, pikaâ€|!"

\_'And now I'm speaking in Pikachuâ€|!'\_

--

"â€|Pikachuâ€|"

\_'â€|It's not the first timeâ€|'\_

--

"â€|Pikaâ€|"

\_'â€|I'd rather notâ€|'\_



--

"Pikaâ€|Pikachu, pikaâ€|"

\_'That's okayâ€|But we still have to battle, you knowâ€|'\_

--

"â€|Uhâ€|Ash, can you still talkâ€|to us?" Misty asked hesitantly.

"Pika!"

\_'Of course!'\_

--

"Uhâ€|I mean, in a way we can understand!?"

You mean like this? I asked, cocking my head.

"Whewâ€|"

"Pika!"

\_'Watch out!'\_

--

"Pi?"

\_'Huh?'\_

--

I glanced at Pikachu just in time to see it dash into me.

"Piika!" I cried out, but I started laughing as we kept rolling over and over.

"â€|Pikachuâ€|" I grinned when we stopped.

\_'â€|I'm getting dizzyâ€|'\_

--

"Pikachuâ€|"

\_'You wouldâ€|'\_

--

We laughed some more.

"â€|Pikaâ€|" I sighed.

\_'â€|So this is what it's like to be Pikachuâ€|'\_

--

"Pi \_ka\_ chu!"

\_ 'Yep!' \_

--

"â€|Pika!"

\_ 'â€|Cool!' \_

--

"â€|Hey, Ash? Are you gonna change back?" Misty asked.

Huh? Ohâ€|umâ€|I guess I'd betterâ€|That is, if we're done battling, right Pikachu?

"Pi-ika!" Pikachu laughed.

Okayâ€|

I concentrated on becoming Mew, and I quickly changed back.

"â€|â€|Can you only change into PokÃ©mon?" Misty asked.

"â€|Hmâ€|" said Billie.

Uhâ€|wellâ€|â€|

"Um, don't turn into me though," Misty said quickly, "Umâ€|How aboutâ€|Brock?"

I blinked at her, then I looked over at Brock.

Umâ€|Why?

"Well, you knowâ€|Just as a testâ€|" She laughed nervously.

I didn't really want to turn into Brock, butâ€|

"Oh, quit it, Misty. You know you want him to turn back into himself," Billie interrupted.

Eh-hehâ€|

Misty flashed Billie a dangerous look.

"I know that Billieâ€|but don't you think we oughta go one step at a time?"

"Wellâ€|â€|He already turned into Pikachuâ€|"

"Mewâ€|"

\_ 'Rightâ€|' \_

--

"But what if he needs to see something in order to turn into it?" Misty asked.

Umâ€|How about if you stop talking about me like I'm not here?

"Sorry, Ash," Billie said.

"Yeahâ€|â€|â€|Oh fine!" Misty shouted, "Go ahead and try right now, if you really want to."

\_How do I turn intoâ€|me?\_

--

I tried to think of the different possibilitiesâ€|

"â€|Well, what are you waiting for?" Misty asked.

"Mewâ€|"

\_Umâ€|'\_

--

"Give 'im a little time, geez, Misty," Billie said.

"Don't tell me what to do!"

"I didn't!"

"Well, it sounded like you did!"

"But I didn't."

"MEW!!!"

\_Stop it!!!'\_

--

Somehow, they made me angry enough to create a large Flash that stopped them in their tracks.

"Pika!"

\_My eyes!'\_

--

"Ahh! Ash! Why'd you do that!?" Billie cried.

"That wasn't niceâ€|!" Misty added.

Sorryâ€|Umâ€|I just wanted to get your attention, I guessâ€|

"Well you have it!" Misty yelled.

I winced.

Wellâ€¦Maybe we canâ€¦practiceâ€¦some moreâ€¦tomorrow? I don't know about you, but I'm tiredâ€¦

"Yeahâ€¦Let's go to bedâ€¦Mew's tired," Misty said.

Huh? Whaâ€¦?â€¦Did you just call me Mew?

But Misty was already on her way inside. She opened the door that Brock was just finishing, and closed it behind her.

â€¦Misty?

"Umâ€¦That was different," Brock said.

"Well, I'm going to bed too. Good night guys," Billie said, following Misty's lead.

Taper got up and stretched.

Count me inâ€¦

Now it was just Brock, Pikachu, and me. Richie and Dr. Gray had already been inside when I came back with Mewtwo.

"â€¦Ash, you gonna quit for the night too?â€¦It was your suggestion, after allâ€¦"

Umâ€¦Yeahâ€¦â€¦â€¦Brock?

"Yeah?"

â€¦Aren't you?

He laughed.

"Ah, don't worry about me, Ash. You know I like fixing stuff."

â€¦Rightâ€¦

I turned to Pikachu.

"Mew."

\_'Come on.'\_

--

"Pikachu!"

\* \* \*

Pikachu fell asleep quickly, and so did Taper. Brock came in a little later, but he fell asleep pretty fast too. When I was absolutely certain that everyone was asleep, I got up and left the room. I kind of 'willed' the door not to creak, and it actually worked. I made

sure it didn't make any noise when I shut it either.

I knew it was dark, but it didn't bother me for some reason. I didn't worry about that though. I had something else on my mind.

I floated down the hall and went into the bathroom. I closed the door and flipped on the light.

I stared at the door for a while. Finally, I took a deep breath and looked in the mirror.

"Mew!" I yelped, and ducked behind the counter.

\_It's okay, Ashâ€|It's okayâ€|It's just youâ€|\_

--

I gathered up my courage and peeked over the counter.

Staring right back at me was a small, pinkish-white creature with big, blue eyes and small, triangular shaped ears.

I gulped.

"Mewâ€|"

\_Helloâ€|'\_

--

I blinked, and so did the Mew in the mirror.

Finally, I pulled myself up and stood on the counter. Now I could see my whole reflection. Underneath the round nose was a small body with two weak looking arms coming out of it. The legs were round at top, but the feet were really big. Behind, a long, tail curved around on its own.

"â€|Mewâ€|"

I got a little closer. As I looked, I finally saw something familiar.

"Mewâ€|"

On my cheeks were small, dark spots, that looked like zigzagsâ€|

I blinked to make sure I wasn't hallucinating, but they didn't disappear.

"Mewâ€|" I smiled.

When I saw myself smile, I couldn't help but laugh.

\_Well, now I know why Misty said I was cuteâ€|!\_

--

Then I remembered that I was supposed to be trying to be quiet, and I made myself stop.

\_Okayâ€|Nowâ€|Now we're gonna tryâ€|We're gonna try something newâ€|\_

--

I glanced at myself one last time and jumped to the floor.

\_Okay, this is it. If I can pull this offâ€|\_

--

I shut my eyes tight and tried to remember myselfâ€|before I had evolvedâ€|It wasn't as easy as I had thought it would be, because I did remember everything that had happened beforeâ€|but my mind seemed to shut itself down when I tried to Transform into myself.

\_Come on, come onâ€|This can't happenâ€|Please workâ€|\_

--

I tried to remember what it had been like to be human, but I came up with a blank.

\_This is crazy! I know what it's like! Why can't Iâ€|?\_

--

I tried a different approach.

\_I am Ash. I am Ashâ€|I am Ashâ€|I am humanâ€|â€|I can do thisâ€|â€|â€|\_

--

I lost track of whether I was standing or floating, but I ignored that. I saw a few flashes of light, even though my eyes were closed, but I ignored that too. The only thing I was worried about was Transforming.

\_Humanâ€|I've gotta become humanâ€|â€|pleaseâ€|\_

--

"Ah!!"

A blinding flash of light pierced through my head and I collapsed to the ground. I felt sick, and my mind was in a fog, but I was still awake. I blinked my eyes open. I felt the cold tile floor on my cheek, and that helped me wake up a little. I blinked and tried to find my surroundings, but the light was fading back and forth. Lightâ€|darkâ€|lightâ€|darkâ€|

I looked in front of me. My head was pointed to the side, so if I looked hard enough while it was still light, I could see my hand lying on the groundâ€|

\_â€|Hand?\_

--

I blinked and looked harder. I think the light lasted a little longer, and I could see that it really was a hand.

Just to prove to myself that it was mine, I clenched it and unclenched it. The hand moved.

“I did it!”

--

I smiled and moved to stand up. I got up to my knees, but I had to stop, because the darkness flashed again. It passed soon, and I grabbed onto the sink and pulled myself up. I glanced at the mirror. Instead of a Mew, I saw a boy with black hair, tan face, brown eyes. He looked tired. The darkness came again, and I tried to push it away, but it only left for a moment before coming back.

“Leave me alone!” I pleaded.

I wanted to enjoy myself while I could, but it wouldn't let me. It came back one more time and wasn't as forgiving.

### 38. To Viridian City

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 38

#### Chapter 38

"To Viridian City"

"Ah-! Ash?"

“Someone?” Huh?

--

I blinked my eyes open slowly, letting my eyes adjust to the light.

"Ash! Are you okay?"

I turned my head to see who was talking to me.

“Misty?"

"Are you okay, Ash?" she asked again.

“I think so.”

I groaned and looked down at my hands but they weren't hands anymore. They were paws.

“What!?"

I glanced backwards in confusion and saw my tail curling around behind me.

“What's the matter, Ash?"

I thought Iâ€|Butâ€|â€|Iâ€|â€|I thought for sure that Iâ€|â€|Was I dreaming?

"â€|â€|And that meansâ€|?"

â€|Last night, I came in here, and Iâ€|I Transformedâ€|

"â€|â€|Umâ€|I could ask you \_why\_ you were Transforming in the bathroom in the middle of the night, but, insteadâ€|I think I'll askâ€|â€|What's your point?"

Misty, Iâ€|I Transformed into myself.

She stared at me. I think I completely confused her, because both her face and her emotions were completely unreadable.

"â€|Umâ€|Aren't you alreadyâ€|â€|you?"

No! I meanâ€|Iâ€|became human.

I watched as her jaw slowly dropped. It took a few seconds, but she recovered and stood up.

"Ash, you're not just pulling my leg, are you!?" she demanded.

Noâ€|

"Urrâ€|How can you sound so honest? That can't be realâ€|"

â€|It sure seemed realâ€|

"â€|â€|Did you change back and fall asleep or something?"

\_Huh? Ohâ€|â€|\_

--

â€|It didn't last very long, because I didn't even get to stand up before I blacked outâ€|

"What!?"

â€|â€|Unless I changed back while I was unconsciousâ€|â€|

"Ash, I thought you had finally broken that habit," said a voice from the hall.

Misty and I glanced out the doorway to see Billie smirking at us.

Whatâ€|habit? I asked.

"You knowâ€|blacking out constantlyâ€|It can't be good for your health, you know. You keep it up, and you might get a concussionâ€|if you haven't alreadyâ€|"

"Billie, I think we would know if he had a concussion," Misty



replied.

"Wellâ€¦Maybe the symptoms are differentâ€¦for Mewsâ€¦"

Whâ€¦at? Thâ€¦atâ€¦

I laughed loudly.

That can't be true! Haâ€¦We're not soâ€¦â€¦differentâ€¦â€¦

I stopped and stared at the floor. It was a blue color, kind of darkâ€¦It wasn't really hard, but it wasn't really soft eitherâ€¦All in all, a nice carpet for a hallwayâ€¦â€¦but I couldn't help noticing how much my feet contrasted with itâ€¦I glanced at Misty's, and then at Billie's. Our feet were almost the same size, but they were a lot bigger than I wasâ€¦

"â€¦You okay, Ash?" Billie asked.

â€¦Yeahâ€¦

"Wellâ€¦â€¦Breakfast is readyâ€¦You coming?" said Misty.

Umâ€¦Not really hungryâ€¦

They both stared at me as if I was possessed. I glanced up at them.

â€¦What? I asked.

"Uhhâ€¦Are you sure?" Misty asked.

Yeahâ€¦Why?

"Well, umâ€¦â€¦uhhâ€¦" Billie added, helpfully.

â€¦If that's all you've got to say, I'm going outside, I said.

\_Mewtwo's gonna be waiting for meâ€¦I \_know\_ itâ€¦\_

--

"Hey, wait!" Misty said, "Where are you going?"

Umâ€¦Outsideâ€¦

"Justâ€¦outside?"

Uhâ€¦Yeahâ€¦â€¦I might not be back for a whileâ€¦but don't worry, okay? I'll come backâ€¦

"â€¦That's what you said last timeâ€¦" Billie said softly.

Don't worryâ€¦I promise I'll be back.

She didn't say anything and looked down, but I knew what she was thinkingâ€¦Our little agreement on how promises were cheapâ€¦

I grinned.

See ya.

I floated to the front door, and this time, I opened it before going through.

“You're late.

I glanced up and saw a familiarly-shaped shadow in the forest.

Good to see you too, I replied.

Come on, we have to get moving! Follow me.

With that, it turned around and started to fade into the woods.

Uh! Hey! Wait up!

I floated after Mewtwo.

““You know what I did last night? I asked.

No, and I don't really care.

““I think you should.

It gave me a cool glance.

Oh really? Why is that, Mew?

Because! Because I Transformed into! um! a human.

It stopped walking.

“Now why would you do a silly thing like that?

Wha! It's not silly!

Of course it is, Mewtwo said with a shrug, Humans are very silly creatures. Turning into one when you have a choice not to is even sillier.

But Mewtwo! I am a human!!

“No! You're a Mew!

But! But I can turn into a human! Uh! Watch!

I dropped to the ground and tried it one more time.

\_Humanhumanhumanhuman!\_

--

I felt Mewtwo's surprise as it watched me.

Mew, what are you doing?

“Transforming” I answered.

“That looks painful”

The flashes of darkness were back “Mewtwo was right”

It “is”

“Then why are you doing it?”

“Because” “I want to prove” “that I “am” a human” “”

The black knives came and ran right through me. One flew through my head, then another came and went right through my ribcage. More and more came, and they started tearing me apart “but I couldn't let that stop me” “I had to do this” “one more time”

“Mew! Stop it! You're hurting yourself!”

It's not “that” “bad” “”

Mew, stop it right now!!

From out of nowhere, a white fist appeared and hit me with the force of a truck. The knives blinked out and I was sent head over heels until I finally rolled to a stop.

I groaned and opened my eyes. It looked like someone had made the forest into a jigsaw puzzle, but put the pieces in the wrong place. I blinked several times and the pieces moved into the right slots, but something was still strange “

I saw Mewtwo's legs walk towards me, but it looked like it was walking on the trees “

“Mew?”

“Huh?”

--

“I hope that you don't try that again” Mewtwo said.

I shook my head and toppled over. Everything looked normal all of a sudden.

What the “?”

Hm? Oh “You must have lost your equilibrium” “You were on your head just a moment ago”

Oh “\_Now\_ you tell me”

I stood up shakily and looked up at Mewtwo.

“Why did you hit me?”

I did you a favor, Mew. If I hadn't broken you out of that trance,

you would've ended up hurting yourself a lot more than I just did.

Butâ€|but I was Transforming! It didn't hurt when I Transformed into Pikachu!

That's probably because you had Pikachu right in front of you when you didâ€|If you try it again now, you'll probably hurt yourself again.

â€|Should I try it? I asked.

No. We don't want to be any later than we already are. Come on.

I sighed.

Whatever ya sayâ€|

\* \* \*

It didn't take too long to get to the HQâ€|I did get a little restless thoughâ€|I tried perching on several different places on Mewtwo, its shoulder, its head, even its tailâ€|It kept swatting me off though, said something about dignity, whatever that means.

When we got to the HQ, the boss was already waiting for us.

"â€|You're late," he said.

I literally felt Mewtwo's anger go sky-high. I glanced at it in alarm. Its eyes were already starting to shine.

Mewtwoâ€|â€|Please calm downâ€|You're making me nervousâ€|â€|

Mewtwo didn't say anything, but the glint in its eyes lessened. Its anger only receded a little though, and it didn't stop staring at the boss. It had its fists clenched, and its tail was twitching dangerously.

"â€|I see you've brought a friend this timeâ€|Hoping to outnumber me?"

With that last comment, he laughed long and loud.

â€|He's got a pointâ€| I said.

I came backâ€|to give you everything that you've given to meâ€|  
Mewtwo said darkly.

Uhâ€|

"Really? I've given you so muchâ€|I don't think you can repay me so easily."

I wouldn't bet on thatâ€|Humans are very fragile creaturesâ€|

â€|Mewtwo?

Its eyes burned blue and a small ball of energy appeared between its paws.

What are you doing!? I exclaimed.

Let's begin! Shall we?

Uh, I don't think that's a good-

"Mr. Mime, go! Barrier."

Giovanni let a Mr. Mime out of a Pokéball, and it quickly created a glass-like wall. Mewtwo released its energy ball, and it paused for only a split second before smashing the Barrier and sending Mr. Mime flying. Giovanni had stepped aside, and he smiled at Mewtwo.

"Not bad. I trained you well."

You were never my master.

Giovanni chuckled to himself.

"We'll see!"

He glanced at me.

"And since you brought along such an incredible specimen, it would only be fair if I captured the both of you! With the two of you at my side, Team Rocket will be unstoppable!"

No!

That will never happen! You cannot capture us, Mewtwo said.

Giovanni only smiled.

"We'll see!"

He took a small machine out of his pocket. He pressed a button, and a Pokéball appeared and let out a Tentacruel. Immediately after Tentacruel was out, another Pokémon came out. It was a Poliwrath. After six Pokémon had come out, he pressed the button again, and six more Pokémon came out. After it seemed like he had at least one of every Pokémon in the world, he reached in his jacket and let out five more Pokémon. Kingler, Golem, Machop, Rhydon, and Charizard!

I floated to the ground and stared Giovanni's army particularly at Charizard. There was something different about it. The flame on its tail seemed darker somehow. There wasn't any yellow anymore, just orange and red and its eyes. I could sense a sadness coming from it. Actually when I looked from Pokémon to Pokémon, I could feel the same sadness in each of them!

What did he do to them? And do I really want to find out?

"Well now, Mewtwoâ€|Still confident?"

Mewtwo, I hate to break it to you, but he's got us seriously outnumbered.

We can't back down nowâ€|If we are to lose, then let us go down fightingâ€|

I didn't like the way it said thatâ€|

### 39. What Friends Are For

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 39

#### Chapter 39

"What Friends Are For"

Mew, try to pick out a PokÃ©mon that looks particularly strong and Transform into it. You don't stand a chance as you are nowâ€|

I looked at Mewtwo in surprise.

Are you saying I'mâ€|â€|

\_â€|Okay, maybe I amâ€|â€|\_

--

â€|But you're the strongest one here! I said "out loud".

Then Transform into me. It doesn't matter what you do. Just do it!

â€|Okayâ€|

â€|But let me weaken them first before you get into battleâ€|

"â€|Do you surrender?" Giovanni asked smugly.

Mewtwo's eyes flash blue.

â€|Never.

Mewtwo flew forward so suddenly it left me spinning. When I recovered I found myself witnessing something very close to a massacre. PokÃ©mon were falling left and right. Mewtwo was protecting itself with a blue sphere, and they couldn't get near it without getting blasted away by its psychic powerâ€|

\_Wowâ€|\_

--

Giovanni had made his way away from the fight and was just watching, smiling to himself.

\_â€|He's got something up his sleeveâ€|\_

--

He took out the little machine again and pushed another button. A pipe appeared that grew into a showerhead. It started spraying some type of liquid, and when it hit his Pok  mon, they rose up again, ready to fight.

What the heck!? I exclaimed.

Mewtwo glanced at the shower while still driving off Pok  mon.

It must be Max Revive, it answered.

Oh that is so  |

He's trying to wear us out. He knows he can't beat us in a fair fight, so he's using an 'invincible' army  |Mew, see if you can't do anything about that machine  |

You mean you want me to  |

I dodged a Pok  mon that was flying towards me after being hit by Mewtwo.

Yes! Try to destroy it! The sooner the better!

Um  |Okay  |

I floated cautiously around the battle, which was centered entirely on Mewtwo, and kept on dodging flying Pok  mon.

"  |Don't forget about the Mew!" Giovanni yelled.

\_Oh great  |I was doing so well  |\_

--

Before I could blink, a Golbat flew up to me and latched onto my head, causing both of us to fall to the ground.

Ah! Get off of me, you stupid-!

I struggled to get loose, but the Golbat just held on tighter. I tried pushing it away, but it was too strong.

Let  |me  |go!!

The more I fought it, the weaker I seemed to get  |Then I realized what it was doing  |

\_Leech Life! Mewtwo said that  |psychic is weak against  |\_

--

I fought even harder and tried to remember that new attack I'd learned  |

"Meeeeewwww!!!"

I used the strongest Thunderbolt I could summon up, and Golbat ended

up dazed enough to let go of my head. I staggered backwards and stared at it. It was dazed, but not beaten. I had to get out of there before it recovered.

I flew up and made my way straight to Giovanni, praying that I wouldn't be interrupted againâ€¦I really should've known betterâ€¦

A Beedrill suddenly appeared and started using Pin Missile. I tried to dodge, but it was too fast and I ended up stuck full of tiny, very painful, pins. I floated lower to the ground, and the Beedrill saw this as the perfect opportunity to use its Twineedle attack.

Oh noâ€¦Please don'tâ€¦ I pleaded.

"Beeeeâ€¦"

\_ 'Master saidâ€¦' \_

--

It wasn't going to stop. I landed and closed my eyes.

\_ This is itâ€¦ \_

--

The Beedrill struck two times in a row, each blow was like a knifeâ€¦cutting through meâ€¦but it hurt more than the black knivesâ€¦

I opened my eyes just in time to see the Beedrill get punched and thrown far to the side. Mewtwo face appeared in its place and looked down at me. I noticed that its blue sphere was now covering both of us.

Are you okay?

The place looked very murkyâ€¦It seemed like the blue was trying to cover everythingâ€¦

Mew?

I staggered, but Mewtwo caught me. I felt it pick me up, then use one paw to knock out yet another of Giovanni's PokÃ©mon.

â€¦I have an ideaâ€¦

I didn't have the energy to reply, but I decided that it was probably for the best.

â€¦Brace yourself, Mew.

\_ â€¦Huh?! \_

--

Mewtwo threw me. After breaking through its Barrier, I rolled through the air until I crashed headfirst into a hard, skinny object. I fell to the ground with a brand-new throbbing headache, but I started to feel a refreshing rain falling on me.



\_â€|Wait, I didn't know it was rainingâ€|\_

--

I looked up to see that I was sitting right under Giovanni's "shower". Giovanni saw me and grinned.

"Well, well, wellâ€|Looks like another rare PokÃ©mon to add to my collectionâ€|"

\_â€|What?\_

--

He took out a PokÃ©ball, and it whistled as he enlarged it.

"Thanks for offering yourself. You're mine now."

I stared at the PokÃ©ball.

\_What is heâ€|?\_

--

He threw it at me.

\_Oh yeah!! He's trying to capture me!!\_

--

"Mew!" I yelped.

\_ 'Help!' \_

--

I turned and tried to scramble away. Giovanni had been expecting that thoughâ€|He had thrown the PokÃ©ball so that it would hit me if I tried to run.

\_MEW\_!\_\_

--

Before I knew it, something very large came out of the sky and landed on me. I found myself shrouded in darkness and I couldn't move an inch.

\_Noâ€|\_

--

A small ray of light appeared in front of me, and I found myself being lifted upâ€|The wall in front of me was dark thoughâ€|It was purpleâ€|I looked up.

Mewtwo! I cried happily.

Mewtwo had me in its arms protectively. It wasn't looking at me

though. It was staring straight ahead. I followed its gazeâ€|It was staring at Giovanni.

Giovanni stared back.

"Wellâ€|that was unexpectedâ€|" he said, "Since when did you start caring about others, Mewtwo?"

â€|Maybe it's about time you started, Mewtwo replied.

Giovanni turned off the shower, since we were standing under it right then, instead of his PokÃ©mon.

"I do care. I care about you, Mewtwoâ€|I care about getting you back."

That's exactly why I left.

"You made a hasty decision. Why don't you come back and we can discuss this further."

You've had your chanceâ€|Now release all of your PokÃ©mon, and we can settle this the way it's supposed to be settled.

"What are you talking about, Mewtwo? All of my PokÃ©mon are released! Look at them all!"

Mewtwo didn't look. It kept its cold gaze fixed on Giovanni.

Release them back to their owners. Release them into the wild if they no longer have ownersâ€|They don't belong to you.

"My PokÃ©mon are loyal to me. Did you see how hard they were battling in my name? They won't leave."

Mewtwo narrowed its eyes, scaring even me.

I know how you train, Giovanni. These PokÃ©mon may obey you, but they are not loyal and would turn on you in a second if they had the chanceâ€|Now release them so they won't have to hurt anyone again.

"I think you're underestimating me, Mewtwo," said Giovanni.

I think you underestimate me.

"â€|What about that Mew? Where did you find it? Why is it on your side? You're not like any other PokÃ©mon. It doesn't have any business with you."

I answered before Mewtwo could.

I'm here because I'm different from any other PokÃ©mon.

I saw his eyes widen in surprise. His mouth fell open slightly.

â€|Recognize me? I asked.

"Imâ€|im-p-possibleâ€|" he stuttered.

I grinned.

Obviously not. Now it's my turn to ask you a question

You're not gonna? Mewtwo asked.

I've gotta know I said to Mewtwo. Then to Giovanni, I said, Are we related?

He stepped back and raised his hand, pointing at me.

"You're not Ash! That's ridiculous! Humans aren't Mews! This is some kind of joke! Use your real voice, Mew."

I jumped out of Mewtwo's arms and glared at Giovanni.

This is my real voice!

"But! But! "

Do I have to prove it?

Mewtwo already knew what I had in mind.

Mew! Don't do it. You'll just hurt yourself again!

I don't care!! I need a straight answer outta this guy, and this is the only way I'm gonna get it!

Mew!

I landed and let my anger fuel me. As I concentrated, the knives came, but this time, I destroyed them before they could get near me. I needed to know! I couldn't let some stupid black knives stop me from finding out the truth.

The knives didn't give up. They kept coming, but I destroyed them all. My anger was giving me the power I needed to protect myself from them.

I felt the change! A whiteness covered over me instead of blackness and when I opened my eyes I was human.

I fell to the ground, breathing hard. The Transform had taken a lot out of me, even without the black knives cutting through me! I must have exhausted myself by fighting them!

"No! That can't be right! You can't be! Ash!"

"Yeah? Well I am! Deal with it."

I looked up. His expression was that of total surprise. He moved his mouth but couldn't say anything.

"Now! will you please answer me? I think I deserve to know!"

"You're not Ash!"

I had had it. I threw myself up so forcefully that I overpowered myself and Mewtwo had to catch me before I fell.

"Yes I am! My name is Ashura Ketchum, from Pallet Town. I am a Pokémon Master and a former Rocket! You! You would do anything to keep me in it! but you can't anymore!"

"! Ashura! I thought you didn't like that name."

"I don't, but I had to use it, because you already called me Ash."

He shook his head.

"Wait a second! You! You still can't be Ash!"

"What else do I have to do to prove it!?"

"! If you really are Ash! I've got it! Charizard! Come here!"

Charizard shuffled over and looked from me to Giovanni.

"C-harrrizarrrrd?" it muttered.

\_'Yes Master?\_'

--

\_'No way! Charizard never said that to me! Even Charmander called me Ash!\_'

--

"! Is that the real Ash?" Giovanni asked, pointing at me.

Charizard looked at me. The sad look I had seen earlier was still there, only sadder.

"Zard!"

\_'Yes!\_'

--

Giovanni's head snapped up.

"What!?"

"Charizard! Izaarrd!"

\_'I saw him evolve! That's really him!\_'

--

"You! You saw him evolve!? And you didn't tell

me!?"

"Charizaarrrdâ€|"

\_'I didn't think it matteredâ€|'\_

--

\_â€|It's lyingâ€|It just didn't tell him because it wanted to protect meâ€|\_

--

\_â€|Charizardâ€|\_

--

Giovanni took out a PokÃ©ball and enlarged it.

"I've had enough out of you. Get back in here. Right now."

"Wait!"

I broke free from Mewtwo and fell forward. I grabbed onto the PokÃ©ball the Giovanni was holding. He stared down at me angrily.

"â€|Pleaseâ€|" I said.

He shook me off of his arm. I was barely able to keep my balance.

"Don't interfere, Ash. If you were a good trainer, Charizard might have listened to you before and none of this would have happened. However, you couldn't handle it. I was the only one who could tame Charizard, so it rightfully belongs to me."

I felt painedâ€|There were no black knives this timeâ€|but his words stung just as bad as his Beedrill hadâ€|I tried to hold back the tears that were threatening to come out.

"Youâ€|â€|Youâ€|â€|"

I took a deep breath.

"You saidâ€|â€|You said thatâ€|"

I swallowed and tried to continue.

"You said that Iâ€|"

The tears came out.

"You said that you thought I was a good trainerâ€|"

That was all I could say. I swallowed my tears and they trickled down my throat. I couldn't speak anymore. I could only sob as breathing became harder.

\_He \_did\_ say thatâ€|He said he knew that I could win the PokÃ©mon tournamentâ€|He said that I could beat the Elite Fourâ€|and nowâ€|heâ€|\_

--

â€|Don't cryâ€|â€|Ashâ€| Mewtwo said softly.

I turned in surprise.

Youâ€|called meâ€|â€|Ashâ€| I said.

â€|â€|That's your name, isn't it?

Despite my tears, I had to smile.

â€|Thanksâ€|

â€|That's whatâ€|â€|friendsâ€|â€|are forâ€|

\_â€|You've never had a friend before, have youâ€|â€|\_

â€|Mewtwoâ€|

It was getting easier to breathe, and the tears were slowing their rush.

For the first time since I'd met it, Mewtwo smiled.

"â€|â€|Char?"

\_ 'â€|â€|Ash?' \_

--

I turned around.

"Yeah?"

"â€|â€|Izard?"

\_ 'â€|â€|Forgive me?' \_

--

I grinned.

"Of course."

Charizard grinned back.

Giovanni glanced back and forth at all of us.

"Hold on. Don't think you're gonna get out of this that easily! Everyone! Attack them!"

Charizard glared at him. It took a deep breath and seriously flamed him. The other PokÃ©mon watched in shock. When they realized that

Giovanni could be hurt, they moved forward and finally charged.

He glanced at them in alarm.

"Hold on. You can't do this. Get back in your Pokéballs!"

They didn't stop. I started to recognize their feelings, and I suddenly realized their intentions.

"Stop!!" I screamed.

I changed back into Mew and dashed forward.

Mew! Mewtwo shouted.

I ignored Mewtwo and used Flash. The Pokémon stopped immediately and everyone looked around dazedly.

"Mew!" I shouted, "Me-ew, mew! Mewmew? Mew?"

'You can't kill him! He may have done lots of awful stuff to you, but he never tried to kill you. You can't kill someone for that! Okay?'

--

They looked at me like I was crazy, but they didn't try to attack.

Mew why did you?

I couldn't let them hurt me

I looked at Giovanni.

You are my father aren't you?

He stared at me like he couldn't believe what was going on I couldn't really blame him.

"If you really are Ash then yes Yes, I am."

It's about time

"But why did you save me? After all that I've done to you You must hate me"

It doesn't matter You're still a person I couldn't just watch you

"Ashura I knew your mother would raise you well"

I wanted to ask him so much After ten years of never seeing him it was hard to believe he was real

"much better than I could have done" he finished.

I looked up.

What do you mean?

"â€|â€|Maybe we can talk about it some other timeâ€|â€|This all comes as a shock to meâ€|"

Yeah. Me too.

"I can imagineâ€|."

â€|Will you release your PokÃ©mon so we can leave in peace? Mewtwo asked.

Giovanni looked like he was going to say no, but I spoke before he could.

Of course he will, I said, All we need to do is find their original trainers and return themâ€|â€|â€|What about you, Charizard?

Charizard nodded.

"Charrrrâ€|Charizarrrrdâ€|"

\_'I'll come with you, Ash.'\_

--

â€|Thank you.

I can probably Teleport them there without any problem, Mewtwo said.

Really? That'd be great!

"Hold on! Isn't anyone going to ask me what I think about this whole thing!?"

I faced him and grinned.

Wellâ€|you may be my dad, but these PokÃ©mon still don't belong to you. They're going back to their \_real\_ masters.

Mewtwo's eyes glowed blue, and a couple of PokÃ©mon disappeared. They glowed again, and more disappeared. He kept going until there were only Wigglytuff, Venomoth, Alakazam, Dodrio, Electrode, Marowak, Rhydon, Chansey, Ditto, Arbok, Raichu, Sandslash, Golbat, Parasect, Magnetron, Hypno, Slowbro, Kingler, Seadra, Seaking, Vileplume, Victreebel, Golem, and Lickitung left.

â€|The rest no longer have trainersâ€| Mewtwo said.

I could sense its tirednessâ€|I guess Teleporting so many PokÃ©mon \_is\_ exhaustingâ€|

I looked at all of them.

What are we gonna do with them? I asked.

"Leave them with me! I'll take good care of them!"



No! we both retorted.

I didn't have any ideas. I looked at Mewtwo.

There may be a place A place where we can be safe from humans it said slowly.

Not that island

No I don't understand it, but I feel that there \_is\_ a place I haven't even been there before but I know that it's safe Kind of crazy, huh?

No it's not I got the same feeling right after I evolved and that's how I found you

Then maybe Maybe we can give it a try

Mewtwo motioned the other Pok mon.

Alright everybody Come close to me I'm going to try Teleportation again

But

Mewtwo glanced at me and I saw a small smile.

You want to help? Okay, come here Now just do what I do, and you should be able to learn Teleportation Alakazam and Hypno, will you help too?

They agreed.

I floated next to him and I listened to his mind I copied him exactly, and I felt us shimmer. The city faded into whiteness

#### 40. The Time Has Come

> <meta name="ProgId"> Chapter 40

#### Chapter 40

"The Time Has Come"

It seemed we had Teleported to the inside of a cave not far from Cerulean City Once we got there, Mewtwo declared that we would stay there for as long as we lived and then some It said that as long as we stayed in the cave, it would protect us from humans and the pain of the outside world

I immediately asked if I could go home. I wanted to be with my friends, both human and Pok mon. Mewtwo said I could, but it asked me to come back once I said goodbye to my human friends, and it asked me to bring the Pok mon back with me. I said I would, and so it let me go.

\* \* \*

When the whiteness of the Teleport faded, I found myself in a very familiar spot

"Ash!?"

I spun around in alarm.

"Mew!" I cried.

\_ 'You!' \_

--

Giovanni "For some reason, I couldn't bring myself to calling him what else he was"

"I knew you'd be back, and this time, you don't have Mewtwo here to protect you"

What "do you mean"?

"Ash "you must tell me where Mewtwo took my Pok mon."

I "can't do that"

"You must. It is imperative that I get them back immediately "Do you have any idea how much effort I put into training them?"

Yeah "but I wouldn't call it training"

"Ash "if you won't help me get them back "then you must at least come back."

\_ What is he talking about? Why would I do something like that? \_

--

You think I'm gonna join you because we have a family tie now?

"Of course not. If I had thought that it would make any difference, I would've told you as soon as I saw you"

\_ "Why \_didn't\_ you tell me right away"?

--

" "but I knew that I couldn't do that "I wanted you to join because you honestly wanted to join, not because you felt some kind of obligation"

\_ Huh? \_

--

"Now I ask you the same question "Will you join Team Rocket?"

I didn't answer right away. That wasn't because I didn't know the answer. I just had to think of the perfect way to tell him.

â€|â€|Not on my life.

"â€|Ashâ€|surely you're making a hasty decisionâ€|"

â€|Don't call me that.

"â€|Whatâ€|?"

\_What am I sayingâ€|?\_

From now on, you will address me as "Mew"â€|â€|Only my friends can call me Ashâ€|

"â€|What!?"

\_Thereâ€|I said itâ€|\_

--

â€|Good byeâ€|

"Wait a second! You can't just leave!"

I didn't stick around to hear anything else he might have said.

\* \* \*

"â€|What are you talking about?" Misty asked.

I could hear the suppressed anxiety in her voice, but I couldn't let that get to meâ€|

I told youâ€|I have a new home nowâ€|â€|andâ€|I can only bring PokÃ©mon back with meâ€|

"Oh, Ashâ€|Forget about Mewtwo! Pleaseâ€|"

I closed my eyes.

I'm sorry, but I can'tâ€|Mewtwo saved meâ€|twiceâ€|The least I can do is keep it companyâ€|

"Ash!"

She was having a hard time hiding her feelings now, and I knew it was time to go.

"Ashâ€|can't you at least stayâ€|for just a little longer?" Billie asked.

Noâ€|â€|Come on you guysâ€| I said to my PokÃ©mon.

Pikachu stood next to me, and so did Taper. Richie put my PokÃ©balls on the ground next to us.

â€|Goodbye you guysâ€|I'll miss youâ€|

"â€|I wish you didn't have to goâ€|" Brock said.

He was trying to sound like his usual, stoic self, but I could tell that he was sad too.

“Why do I have to do this?”

--

“You're gonna come back to visit us, right Ash?” Richie asked.

I hope so, I nodded.

“Well, you'd better come back soon!!” Misty yelled.

“Good old Misty!”

--

I grinned and did my pose.

You can count on that!

That made her laugh a little, and I felt better too.

“Pikachu!”

“Goodbye you guys!”

--

“It's time!”

--

I closed my eyes and recalled the trick that Mewtwo had taught me. Our surroundings faded away into whiteness, and once again, we were at that special place.

Once we'd made sure that everyone had made it safely, I released the remaining Pokémon from their Pokéballs. Mewtwo watched in disdain, and as soon as they were free, it destroyed the Pokéballs.

Hey! What was that for!? I yelled.

Pokéballs! Just another reminder of the evils of humans!

I tried to control my frustration, but then I noticed that Pikachu was agreeing with Mewtwo.

Pikachu, you're supposed to be on my side!

“Pikachu, pika?”

“What can I say? I hate Pokéballs too.”

--

I sighed. It didn't look like I could win that argument.

â€|Mewtwo?

Yes?

Umâ€|can I Teleport one more time?

â€|You can Teleport as much as you want, that is, until you get too tiredâ€|

No, what I meant wasâ€|â€|I have one more place I want to goâ€|

â€|And where is that?

â€|I want to go see my momâ€|

That definitely surprised Mewtwoâ€|I guess it had forgotten that I had another parentâ€|

Wellâ€|I guessâ€|If you really want toâ€|â€|

Thank youâ€|

"Pikachu?"

\_'Me too? '\_

--

I smiled.

Sorry, Pikachu, but this is just for meâ€|You stay here and try to get used to this place, okay?

"Pikaâ€|â€|Pikapikaâ€|"

\_'Okayâ€|â€|but you'd better come backâ€| '\_

--

"Mewwâ€|!" I laughed.

\_'Have I ever not? '\_

--

\* \* \*

â€|â€|I never realized how beautiful Pallet Town was until I saw at that momentâ€|I could see the whole town from one spot high in the airâ€|and I could call up memories about each spotâ€|not all of them good, but that just added to the wonder of it allâ€|I floated to my house slowly, drinking in the pastâ€|

When I found myself over the roof of my house, I paused and looked down. It sure did look different from aboveâ€|The roof didn't look nearly as shiny as it did from the ground, but then again, I couldn't really see the roof from the groundâ€|I floated around the house. I admired Mom's garden, and how neat she kept everythingâ€|â€|I stopped

when I saw our ash treeâ€|

\_Hmmâ€|\_

--

I floated down to itâ€|

\_â€|We don't have the same name anymoreâ€|\_

--

It didn't bother me as much as I had thought that it would,  
thoughâ€|

\_â€|â€|but you're my friend, so you can still call me Ashâ€|\_

--

I twirled around for the fun of it and flew straight to the front  
door.

Mom!! I'm home!!

I pounded on the door with both fists until Mimey opened it up.

Hi Mimey! Where's Mom!? I exclaimed.

"Mr. Mime!!?"

\_ 'What the heck!!?' \_

--

I ignored its surprise and let myself into the house.

\_Let's seeâ€|at this time, she is probably right aroundâ€|\_

--

I flew towards the kitchen and ended up bumping into her.

"Yikes!" she cried.

I shook my head to clear it. Then I looked up happily.

Mom!

She must have stared at me for a good five minutesâ€|I didn't mind  
though. I knew she would recognize me sooner or  
laterâ€|

"â€|â€|Ash?"

\_She did!! She recognized me!!\_

--

Yep!

I flung myself upwards and wrapped my arms around her. It was a little hard though, because my arms weren't as big as they used to be.

"Mee-ewww."

"I'm so happy to see you again!"

--

"Ash? Is that really you?"

She picked me up and held me in front of her. I didn't try to stop her. I was just glad she wasn't freaking out like everyone else had.

"Oh my. Ash."

"Mew?"

"Yeah?"

--

"I can't believe!"

"Meww."

"I evolved!"

--

"How did you?"

"Mew. Mew?"

"Hey. Can you understand me?"

--

"Of course I can understand you. I've known you all your life."

"Wow."

--

"Mew."

"I'm glad!"

--

"Ash. Let's sit down."

"Mew."

"Okay."

--

She brought me to the couch and sat me down next to her.

"â€|Nowâ€|I want you to tell me exactly how this happenedâ€|"

Wellâ€|â€|That's a long storyâ€|â€|

"I want to hear it."

Okayâ€|

â€|So, I told herâ€|

\* \* \*

When I finished, she looked like she was about to cry.

â€|What's wrong?

"Ashâ€|I'm so sorryâ€|â€|"

Why? You didn't do anythingâ€|

"Noâ€|It's just thatâ€|â€|I'm sorryâ€|"

â€|Huh?

"I guess I should've told you soonerâ€|â€|about your fatherâ€|"

But you didn't know this would happen!

"But I should've guessedâ€|â€|You seeâ€|I knew who he wasâ€|when I married himâ€|â€|"

Of course you didâ€| I said, a little befuddled.

"No, I meanâ€|I knew that he was in charge of Team Rocketâ€|"

You what!?

"Ash, please let me finishâ€|"

I nodded and kept quiet.

"I met himâ€|"

She looked upwards in thought.

"â€|about thirteen years agoâ€|He was a nice, handsome young manâ€|and he really did seem to care about meâ€|"

That didn't sound like what I thought of him at allâ€|

"Let's seeâ€|I met him in Viridian City while I was running an errand for my motherâ€|After he helped me finish my job, we spent the night together, until I had to go backâ€|He called me later, and that's what started it all, I guessâ€|I don't want to bore you too much, Ash, so I'll speed it up a littleâ€|



"Wellâ€¦we got engaged, and later on, we got marriedâ€¦â€¦During that time, he also became the head of Team Rocketâ€¦At the time, it was only a small organization that stayed solely in Viridian Cityâ€¦â€¦"

"â€¦After a while, I became pregnant with you, Ashâ€¦â€¦After you were born, we decided to call you Ashura, because we knew you were destined for great thingsâ€¦â€¦"

She laughed softly.

"Who would've guessed that we would be rightâ€¦?"

"â€¦â€¦Mewâ€¦" I begged quietly.

\_'â€¦â€¦Keep goingâ€¦'\_

--

"Oh yeahâ€¦Where was Iâ€¦? Rightâ€¦Nowâ€¦Vanni knew that it would be bad for you if you were immediately brought up into a life of crime, so he stationed Team Rocket in Viridian City and helped it grow into what it is todayâ€¦â€¦"

Vanni?

"Yes, that's his pet nameâ€¦"

â€¦Ohâ€¦

"â€¦He called me everydayâ€¦He asked how I was doing, and how you were doingâ€¦â€¦but his business kept him awayâ€¦â€¦After a while, he asked me not to tell you who he was, so you wouldn't have grow up knowing your father was a criminal mastermindâ€¦He wouldn't even let me tell you about the gym in Viridian City, because he didn't want you going thereâ€¦He was afraid of having to battle youâ€¦"

\_That doesn't sound like the Giovanni that I metâ€¦\_

"â€¦â€¦He also made sure that we were well off, and he sent us money every monthâ€¦I knew it was stolen money, but I couldn't refuse such a charitable gift from himâ€¦"

"â€¦â€¦Ash, I think you know the restâ€¦"

Yeahâ€¦â€¦So that really was himâ€¦â€¦

"Huh?"

I paused, unsure of what I had really meantâ€¦

â€¦He acts like two different peopleâ€¦I meanâ€¦before I met him, he seemed really niceâ€¦â€¦He sent me a gift and a card every time I had a birthdayâ€¦but he never showed up in person, and he never calledâ€¦â€¦"

"Actuallyâ€¦I called himâ€¦"

What!?

"After you were asleep, I would call him so we could check on each other."

I couldn't believe it! They had both been keeping these secrets from me for so long!

"But now you know! Ash, you have no idea how relieving it is to tell this to you. I feel like someone just took a huge burden off of my shoulders!"

Yeah, and put it onto me!

"No, Ash. That's not true. Now we can share the weight, and no one will have to carry too much!"

But what about? What about Giovanni?

"I don't know, Ash. I guess he'll just have to take care of himself now!"

He doesn't have any Pok mon anymore!

"Maybe he can start over, dismantle Team Rocket, and live an honest life! That would make me feel better!"

Thank you, Mom! I think I understand now!

"Understand what?"

I'm not sure, but whatever it is, I understand it!

She looked confused, but I just smiled. I floated up and pecked her on the cheek.

I gotta go now, but I'll be back. I promise.

\* \* \*

I went back to the cave. I stayed there for a few days, but I knew I couldn't stay there forever. I let Mewtwo and the other Pok mon teach me more attacks, and I was even able to teach them a few in return. Eventually though, it was time to say good bye!

You're leaving? Mewtwo asked.

Yes! Mewtwo, I know you can take care of this place just fine by yourself! As for me, I still haven't fulfilled my dream!

But you are a Pok mon Master.

I smiled.

Maybe so, but I'm not the greatest. I still have to beat the Elite Four!

After that, will you come back?

I'll come back, but I won't be able to stay too long. I still have lots to do, and I won't be able to do that all if I just stay here!

â€|â€|I think Iâ€|understandâ€|â€|

Mewtwo, I want to thank you for being a really good friend, and I promise I'll never forget youâ€|â€|and I'll come back to visit lots of times!â€|â€|But right nowâ€|â€|I've got to catch up on everything that I've missedâ€|Soâ€|byeâ€|

Goodbyeâ€|all of youâ€|

I smiled and used Teleport. I had no idea how everything would turn out, but I knew that we would be ready no matter whatâ€|

**\*\*THE END\*\***

End  
file.